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The Roots of Community: A Local Librarian's Resource for Discovering, Documenting and Sharing the History of Library Services to African Americans in Their Communities

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THE ROOTS OF COMMUNITY

A LOCAL LIBRARIAN'S RESOURCE FOR DISCOVERING, DOCUMENTING AND SHARING THE HISTORY OF LIBRARY SERVICES TO AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

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About the Author

DR. MATTHEW R. GRIFFIS is an Associate Professor at the University of Southern Mississippi's School of Library of Information Science. He completed his PhD at the University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Information and Media Studies in London, Canada, holds earlier degrees from Trent University and Queen's University (Kingston) and completed additional graduate training in publishing and the book arts at the Centennial College School of Communications, Media Arts and Design in Toronto.

A longtime specialist of Carnegie libraries and their impacts on communities, Griffis began graduate work in 2006 on the development of public libraries and the nature of libraries as social spaces. His 2013 dissertation, *Space, Power and the Public Library*, explored the historically determined relationships of power, perception and actor control embedded within library designs from the late 19th to the early 21st centuries. As a doctoral candidate, Griffis assisted Dr. Catherine A. Johnson with her study of libraries as facilitators of social capital in urban and rural communities, a project supported with a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Griffis has published work about public libraries as social spaces (most particularly as places of community, gathering and shared experience) in several academic journals and has presented juried papers at numerous regional, national and international scholarly and professional conferences.

Several agencies have funded Griffis's projects, including the Canadian Library Association, the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) and Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), and most recently the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in Washington, DC.

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INTRODUCTION

There should be no limit to how much we document the impacts, past and present, of public libraries on their communities. For nearly two centuries, tax-funded libraries have supported lifelong learning and development by offering users countless resources and services; and although that mission has wavered little over the last century, public libraries have adapted nonetheless to the needs of an ever-changing society. They are, arguably, one of the most versatile public institutions of the modern age.

Yet compared to all published work about the history of education in the United States, what is available about the history of America's public libraries seems thin. Since they have always "been around"—or so it seems—public libraries have perhaps been taken too much for granted. Moreover, much of what is available focuses largely on public libraries' social, political and economic origins, the development of library collections and their effects on the spread of literacy in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Though such work has great value, relatively little of it examines the history of libraries as community spaces. Access is another issue: except for what general interest, non-academic books offer, most of this research remains confined to academic journals available only to students, scholars and librarians. Comparatively less is available for general consumption, especially at local levels; and of the work that has been completed locally, much if not most of it has been decidedly uncritical, often presenting public libraries in an overly favorable light.

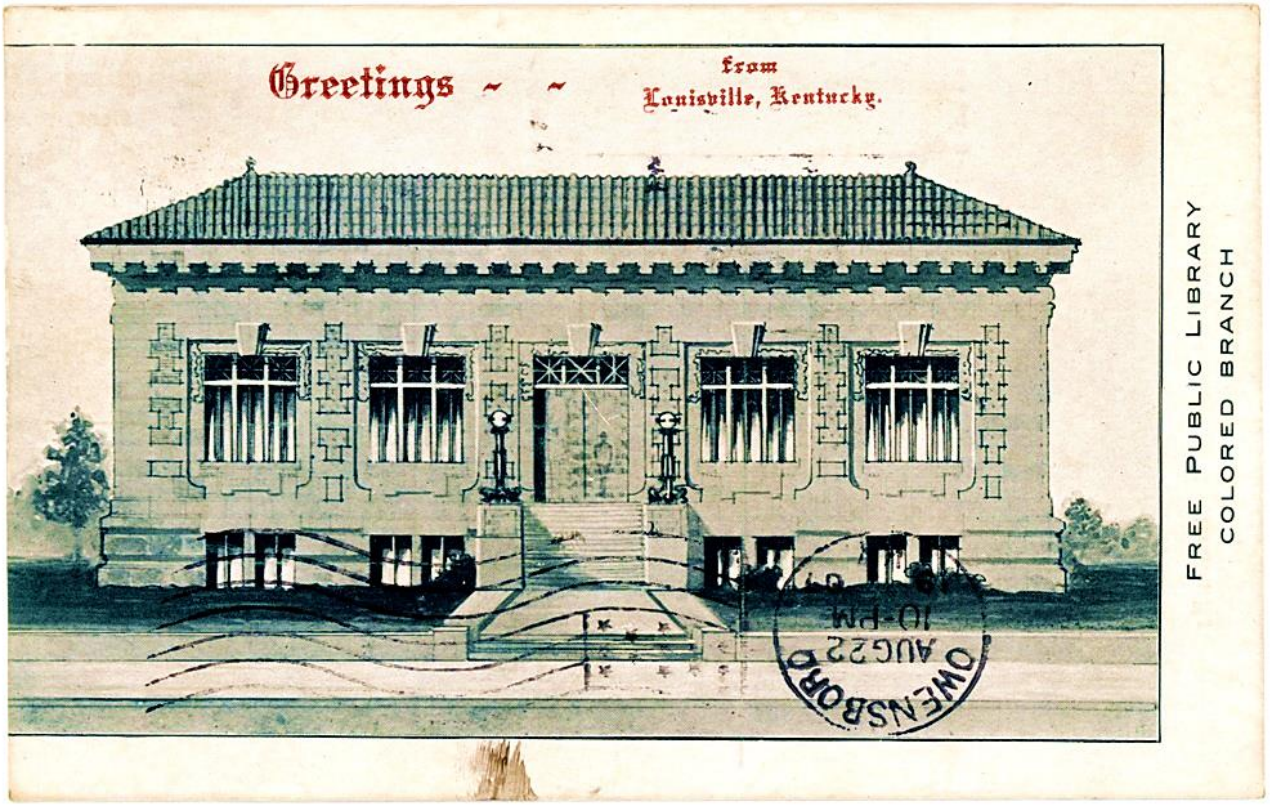
This, perhaps, should not surprise us. Though many would consider public libraries inherently altruistic—that is, they serve the public good by welcoming and accommodating all—libraries, even the "free," tax-supported ones, have not always welcomed or accommodated all. Until not very long ago, many of them (particularly in the South) served for generations as instruments of systemic racism: a discomforting fact to be sure, especially as 21st century librarianship adopts an increasingly social justice bent. Though some libraries show awareness of the less-than-praiseworthy aspects of their pasts, acknowledgment of this history in current library services remains at best passive. For instance, of all the Southern libraries that once maintained separate facilities for African Americans, how many of them now mention so in the "Our History" blurbs they publish online? Some, but even these disclosures can seem perfunctory.

On the other hand, expecting today's librarians to know this history might seem unrealistic. Librarian degree programs seldom cover much if anything about the profession's past; and though nearly all teach research skills, such courses are usually basic and focus heavily (if not exclusively) on social research methods. In other words, not only do many of today's librarians graduate without much historical knowledge of their profession; they often also lack the skills required to learn about it for themselves—at least in the capacity of a scholarly researcher. Undergraduate degrees in history can help, but not all such programs require their students to learn archival research methods. Textbooks help little more: though many primers exist about historical research methods, and handbooks for oral history approaches are also now quite common, no resource yet exists about researching the history of libraries specifically. Given how many libraries currently exist in the United States, might such a resource be useful? Perhaps.

Indeed, libraries might share more about their own history if they knew better how to research it. This requires knowing what to look for, where to find it and how to interpret it.

Yet because of record retention laws, original sources are often difficult to locate. Surviving library records are often incomplete—or worse, were discarded entirely once their retention date passed. This seems especially true of former "colored branch" libraries, many of which were closed by the 1970s. Countless membership registers, catalogs, correspondence files, photographs and manuscripts were lost to time. To many libraries, these materials were simply inactive files taking up much needed space. Yet some libraries have invested well in the preservation of their records; they recognize the valuable historical evidence these materials offer. They also know that past library users and staff may still be available and perhaps even willing to share their memories from decades ago.

In short, there is no telling how much of this history survives, as so much of it still awaits discovery. It is therefore crucial that we increase efforts to document it before the opportunity passes forever.



Established in 1905, Louisville's Colored (later Western Colored) Branch was one the first tax-supported public libraries ever opened for Southern blacks. In 1908, it relocated to this Carnegie building, the first of twelve Carnegie public libraries for African Americans constructed between 1908 and 1924. Mailed months before the building was completed, this postcard shows an early sketch of the library's front elevation.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Intended as a toolkit, this work aims to orient today's library professionals to the basics of historical research so that they may seek more information about the history of local library services—particularly services to African Americans—and educate their communities about this important yet still under-researched aspect of American social and educational history.

This work's specific objectives are to:

- ✓ explain the basic premise, nature and aims of historical research;
- ✓ identify and explain the stages of an historical research project;
- ✓ identify types of projects related to library history;
- ✓ identify primary sources of information and what they might contain;
- ✓ offer, where appropriate, examples of secondary sources that librarians may find helpful to their project needs;
- ✓ offer examples of deliverables or other products appropriate for projects about library history; and
- ✓ offer examples of practical tools (e.g., forms, software applications) that librarians may find helpful while planning their own projects

The work is based on the author's own experiences researching the subject, with help from similar guides from other, non-LIS fields. It serves as an adjunct to *Separate Places, Shared Spaces: Carnegie Libraries as Spaces of Community and Learning 1900 to 1965*, a monograph produced by the Roots of Community, a project that examined the impacts of "colored" Carnegie public libraries in the South.

Though academic researchers may find it useful, this work exists primarily for public librarians either (i) new to historical research or (ii) who have experience but are unfamiliar with researching library history specifically. These may be Community Knowledge librarians, Local History Services librarians or general outreach librarians currently working at small or midsized public libraries in the United States.

CONTENT AND LIMITATIONS

This work includes three major sections: Part 1, "Planning," Part 2 "Gathering" and Part 3, "Sharing." Respectively, these cover the preparation, collection and communication tasks of research projects and offer readers various types of potentially useful resources. Many of these resources were used for the Roots of Community project and appear in this toolkit as examples deemed suitable for that project. Elsewhere, this kit draws examples from other but similar projects. In any case, the project types explored here are generally inexpensive, produce (in most cases) permanent deliverables, and can be completed at any pace and/or attempted by public libraries of nearly any size. Libraries may attempt projects on their own or in partnership with local museums, archives or historical societies.

As a published resource, this work attempts to meet its objectives on two levels: first, to help orient projects about the general history of local library services; and second, to help orient projects that focus specifically on the history of local services to black Americans. It includes information that, presumably, would be appropriate for either kind of project. But any information specific to projects about services to African Americans appears with a green leaf to its left. Separating information this way was deemed necessary as projects about services to black Americans often present unique challenges that, in this author's opinion, deserve special focus. Two other graphics appear regularly throughout the work: one (a small pile of books) indicates examples of external resources related to a specific topic; and the other (a stack of ruled notebook pages) indicates case examples related to a topic. The author hopes that readers will find these navigational devices useful.

Last, this work makes several assumptions about its readers and so deliberately excludes certain kinds of information. It assumes, for example, that readers already possess basic library research skills and so does not cover such topics as how to operate a library catalog, the differences between books and journals, best

practices for Boolean searching, or anything else the average library professional would already know. This work also avoids repeating (in detail, anyway) information already available elsewhere, particularly in works either widely available in print and/or freely available online. For example, though it describes how public libraries might establish an oral history program the work does not explain how to establish such programs anywhere else, nor does it even attempt to cover the many complicated laws that govern such projects. Since other, more specialized resources already offer that information, this work simply refers readers to those.

Although it has been made available as a static, unalterable PDF, this work is considered a work in progress that will likely reappear in updated form. Should readers wish to suggest any additions, deletions or corrections, they may do so using the Roots of Community project's communications page.

DR. MATTHEW R. GRIFFIS,
August 2019.

PART 1

PLANNING

History Basics and

Choosing Sources

1.1. HISTORY BASICS

What is history? This is a big question indeed. For our purposes here, "history" means the interpretation of past events and people as revealed through surviving traces of those events and people. Historical subjects can be a specific place, person or group, period, system of beliefs, institution or organization.[1] Your subject's scope can be narrow and consider only certain aspects of the subject during a specific period; or it can be broad and consider many of the subject's aspects across a wider span of time. In any case, the purpose of "doing history"—as it is sometimes put—is never simply to gather information about the past. As researchers of history, our goal is to better understand how past ideas, beliefs, structures and actions have affected the world of present-day. We typically ask questions like:

- ✓ What happened and why?
- ✓ What do these events suggest about the society in which they occurred?
- ✓ What impacts did those events have on people at the time?
- ✓ Why are these things important today? How is our world different, if at all, as a result?

History, in other words, can improve our understanding of the diversity and complexity of human experience.[2] History allows individuals and groups to explore, strengthen and perhaps even question their identity/ies through a richer knowledge of how they and the world around them came to be.

HISTORY AS KNOWLEDGE

Researchers of history do not collect information the same way social researchers do "in the field" or the way scientists do in controlled conditions like laboratories. As forms of knowledge creation, those traditions assume that researchers want to know more about phenomena in the present, not the past; they also assume that the present is, to a considerable extent, an objective reality best understood by detecting the many and often unseen mechanisms working within it.

This is not quite so with history. Understanding the past depends almost entirely on what traces of it remain plus our ability to make sense of them. A trace can be what survives in human memory, for example a person's description of their own past experiences; it can also be what survives in a physical landscape, like an old building or the site of a battle. Most frequently, traces are what survive in old records, papers or manuscripts—documentary evidence. Whatever their form, traces help us interpret the past and share our interpretations with others through a variety of reporting methods: an article, a book, a presentation or a video, to give some examples.

But whatever method of delivery we choose, our interpretations of the past are never "facts." They are interpretations only—constructions—whose perceived validity often depends on some degree of consensus outside the researcher's individual opinion. And although researchers typically support their interpretations or claims with carefully selected evidence, even evidence can raise more questions than it answers. Whether a given source is accurate or complete enough to support one interpretation or another is itself dependent on consensus or agreement. So, as both a form of knowledge and knowledge creation, history is thus highly contestable. The substance of an interpretation or of a given work is very much a matter of opinion. And no single work is ever the last word on its subject.

Many introductory textbooks about **history** as a discipline already exist and explore its various definitions, traditions and underlying assumptions. For example:

- Jordanova, Ludmilla. *History in Practice*, 2nd edition. London: Hodder Arnold, 2006.
- Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 5th edition. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007.
- Seixas, Peter. *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.
- Spalding, Roger and Christopher Parker. *Historiography: An Introduction*. New York: Manchester University Press, 2009.

BUILDING ON EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

New knowledge always builds on existing knowledge. So, before undertaking any research project, learn as much as you can about your subject, beginning with what others have already published about it:

- ✓ academic journal articles;
- ✓ books (academic or general-interest non-fiction);
- ✓ newspaper or magazine articles (not contemporary to the events you are researching);
- ✓ encyclopedias or other reference works;
- ✓ documentaries (film or radio/podcasts); and
- ✓ unpublished works (e.g., completed dissertations, student essays, etc.)

Simply reading, viewing or listening to these materials does not mean you have begun your own, original research—not at this stage at least. You are simply mapping what others have already learned about the same or similar subjects. What were their areas of focus? What arguments or interpretations did they offer? What evidence did they use? And perhaps most importantly, which aspects of the subject remain less explored?

This is the exploratory phase of research. It will help you determine the scope and approach of your own work. Because by reading as much as possible about your subject, you are not simply learning more about it; you will better understand how your project fits into the bigger picture. It will also help you not repeat what others have already done.

Most librarians are familiar with **literature searching**. However, should you need assistance from a handbook or guide, suitable examples include:

- Badke, William. *Research Strategies: Finding Your Way Through the Research Fog*, 6th edition. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2017.
- Beasley, David. *Beasley's Guide to Library Research*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Mann, Thomas. *The Oxford Guide to Library Research*, 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Peterkin, Darryl L. "Within These Walls": Reading and Writing Institutional Histories." In *The History of U.S. Higher Education*, edited by Marybeth Gasman. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Perrault, Anna H. and Elizabeth S. Aversa. *Information Resources in the Humanities and Arts*, 6th edition. Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2012.

If your subject is the history of library services to African Americans in your community, chances are not especially high that anyone has covered that subject before. Still, your literature review should consider most (if not all) of the following related subjects:

- ✓ The *history of library services* in your community:
  - When and under what circumstances did public libraries form in your community?
  - What other libraries existed, if any, before the present public library?
  - When and under what circumstances did the present public library form?
  - What changes has it experienced since it opened?

- ✓ The *history of African Americans* in your community:
  - When did African Americans first arrive in the region?
  - What past laws, policies or attitudes affected their status or freedoms?
  - What specific people, events or movements affected relations between races?

- ✓ Other *community organizations or places* that offered access to information or social activity:
  - What community groups, clubs or associations existed before integration?
    - Did these organizations include or exclude African Americans?
  - What local newspapers existed?
    - Were any published by or for African Americans?
  - When and under what conditions did the first public schools or colleges form?
    - Which ones were segregated?
    - When did they desegregate? And what local events, if any, effected that change?

Remember that *community* is scalable, geographically. Seek information about local contexts but expand your search to include information about state-level or regional contexts.

CONTEXT AND NARRATIVE

History never happens in a vacuum. Modern, tax-supported public libraries, for example, did not appear out of nowhere in the early to mid-19th century. According to at least one interpretation, public libraries were the result of multiple social and economic forces intersecting at a specific time.[3] Others have even suggested that public libraries were instruments for social control.[4] Whatever the interpretation, public libraries certainly evolved in response to broader social and political changes, especially in the 20th century. Library desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, was the outcome of many interrelated forces and events: years of protest accelerated by key events at regional and national levels (like *Brown v. Board of Education*). So, no matter your subject, its wider contexts are just as important as the subject itself. They *are* the subject, or at least inextricable parts of it. This should inform not just how you interpret your subject but also how you report it.

Because history focuses primarily on events and people from the past, reporting your interpretation of a given subject will involve telling a story or series of related stories. This requires an understanding of narrative and structure. Begin with the story's shape: If your subject is a person, their life and/or career will subdivide into distinct periods based on turning points: key events or experiences that impacted the person's development. The history of a library—any organization or institution, in fact—works much the same way: Its story will also subdivide into distinct periods, as defined by key events that impacted the

library's development as an organization. Determining what these turning points are will help you determine the overall shape of the story you are researching. While every event and person involved may seem equally important at first, the more you uncover about a library's story the clearer it will become which periods and which turning points are most relevant to your project.[5]

PURPOSE, SCOPE AND AUDIENCE

As you learn more about what others have already published, you should identify which aspect(s) of your subject you wish to know more about. You should also consider for which audience(s) you might share your work once you have completed it. Will your work be interesting or useful only to other researchers or scholars? Or will your work appeal mainly to non-academic audiences?

This toolkit assumes that librarians will want to appeal chiefly to *non-academic* audiences—sometimes also called "general interest" audiences. Do not assume, however, that a general interest audience is necessarily a simple one, or that reaching a general interest audience will be easier than reaching a scholarly one. Non-academic audiences often represent a wider variety of social, cultural and educational backgrounds. They will show interest in many of the same things professional scholars do; what differs is how you deliver the material to them. Non-academic audiences, for example, respond better to smaller doses of content delivered in non-traditional ways. So, while traditional forms of scholarly communication will still be useful, you should also consider less traditional ways of sharing your work: short video clips, live performances and engagement through social media. Also avoid academic jargon.

This approach to doing history is the result of two recent movements: *public history* and *community history*. The former might be defined as "the communication of history to the wider public" and is sometimes called "popular history" as it aims to reach not just non-academic audiences but also people not normally interested in historical subjects.[6] *Community history* refers to "the engagement of a community, usually geographically determined, with their local history."[7] *Community history* is more participatory and involves community members directly in the research and delivery of content. Public history projects can easily be modified into community history projects; however, apart from oral history approaches, the latter practice is beyond the scope of this toolkit. Several handbooks listed below offer further information about community history projects.

The most important aspect of your project will be its scope. Begin your research with a general focus on the broader history of libraries in your community (or libraries for African Americans more specifically). But at some point—probably earlier in your research than later—you will have to narrow your scope, or at least the scope of your planned deliverables or products. You might focus on the history of a specific place: a former "colored branch" for African Americans, one that either existed on its own or served as a branch within a larger, city- or county-wide system. Alternatively, you may wish to learn more about the lives and achievements of specific librarians (biography).

Whatever scope you choose, remember that even the most specific subjects must still consider their broader contexts. So, narrowing focus will by no means make your work simpler. In fact, the smaller the "piece" of the puzzle you examine, the more "bigger picture" you will have to learn for the sake of analysis. And seldom will you ever have enough time or space to account for everything you know.

Many introductory works are available about the theory and practice (and even politics) of **public history**. Among them are:

- Beatty, Bob. *An American Association for State and Local History Guide to making Local History.* Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 2017.
- Black, Jeremy. *Contesting History: Narratives of Public History*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Bush, Rebecca Elizabeth and K. Tawny Paul. *Art and Public History: Approaches, Opportunities and Challenges*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
- Cauvin, Thomas. *Public History: A Textbook of Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Dean, David M., ed. *A Companion to Public History*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018.
- Dickinson, Greg, Carole Blair and Brian L. Ott, eds. *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*.
- Gardner, James B. and Paula Hamilton, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, 2nd edition. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1997.
- Howe, Barbara J. and Emory L. Kemp. *Public History: An Introduction*. Malabar, FL: Krieger, 1986.
- Jordanova, Ludmilla. *History in Practice*, 2nd edition. London: Hodder Arnold, 2006.
- Kean, Hilda and Paul Martin, eds. *The Public History Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Lyon, Cherstin M., Elizabeth M. Nix and Rebecca K. Shrum. *Introduction to Public History*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 2017.
- Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th edition. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Sayer, Faye. *Public History: A Practical Guide*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015.

For information about approaches to the history of **African Americans and other minority groups**, the following sources may be of interest:

- Horton, James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, eds. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Rose, Julia. *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
- van Balgooy, Max A. *Interpreting African American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

1.2. CHOOSING SOURCES

Your sources of information will fit at least one of three categories: original or *primary sources*, which usually date from the period researched; *secondary sources*, which are published interpretations of the subject (usually books, articles and film documentaries produced by other historians); and *tertiary sources*, which are sources about sources, for example an annotated bibliography or LibGuide.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Primary sources form the bedrock of historical research. They are contemporaneous documents or artifacts that were created by first-hand witnesses or participants. So, these sources are usually "close" in time and place to the events and people related to your subject and, most importantly, have not already been interpreted by other historians or researchers.

Archival Materials

Primary sources are most typically unpublished materials: old, inactive documents of different types and formats originally created by people, organizations or institutions over the course of their day-to-day life and operations. People's letters, an organization's internal reports, or original photographic images are all common examples of primary sources. These provide invaluable evidence about the activities, decisions, motivations and experiences of their creators. And since they present this information in its original context—that is, uninterpreted by other writers—the evidence they provide is usually more reliable than information culled from secondary sources (which are usually published works). Published materials can sometimes be primary, depending on the information they contain and when they were published. For example, published volumes of a person's letters, a person's published memoirs or even comprehensive anthologies of historical images can be considered primary if they present these sources in complete and unaltered form.

Archival materials—records, papers and manuscripts—typically reside in archival repositories or other research facilities like libraries, museums and historical societies. *Records* typically refers to collections of inactive documents originally created and/or accumulated by an organization, while *papers* and *manuscripts* refer to documents originally created and/or accumulated by individuals for personal, professional and/or creative reasons. But in research terms, these source types are equally valuable and often collected by the same repositories. Examples of repositories include:

- ✓ university (or academic) archives;
- ✓ government (municipal, county, state or federal) archives;
- ✓ corporate (private) archives;
- ✓ historical societies; and
- ✓ public libraries

Archival collections are usually organized around their original creator(s). This is usually a single person, group (for example, a family) or a formal organization (a corporation, institution, community group or committee). Records, papers and manuscripts are usually grouped in different *series* according to like

Several handbooks explain the fundamentals of **archival science**, including the principles and practice of archival organization, description and preservation. For more information on these or other subjects related to archival practice, see the following:

- Arp, Charlie. *Archival Basics: A Practical Manual for Working with Historical Collections*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019.
- Carmichael, David W. *Organizing Archival Records: A Practical Method of Management and Description for Small Archives*, 3rd edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.
- Hunter, Gregory S. *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-to-Do-It Manual for Libraries*, 2nd edition. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2003.
- Hamill, Lois. *Archives for the Lay Person: A Guide to Managing Cultural Collections*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2012.
- O'Toole, James M. and Richard J. Cox. *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006.
- Roe, Kathleen. *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005.

function or format. Sometimes repositories will also maintain *special collections*, which are not necessarily organized around an original creator but are instead accumulated artificially by the repository itself. They may focus on a specific subject, theme or format and normally contain both published and unpublished materials. Examples by format include historical map (cartographic) collections, image (photographic) collections, rare book (bibliographic) collections, and so forth. Special collections are accumulated primarily for the benefit of researchers, and later sections of this chapter will provide examples related specifically to library and African American history.

While many repositories post digital copies of items for online browsing, such collections usually represent but a fraction what a repository contains in original print form. Use online collections in the early stages of your research but prepare to visit repositories that contain highly relevant materials. Multiple visits may be necessary, depending on the extensivity of those materials.

Fortunately, most repositories document the scope, contents and origins of archival collections in *finding aids*, which are descriptive inventories created primarily for researcher use. Before consulting any archival collection, determine first whether its repository maintains a finding aid for it. If none is available online, request a copy by email or ask if the repository keeps print copies onsite for visiting researchers. Consulting a finding aid is often necessary before researchers can even request materials from storage and will help you determine which of a collection's materials may be most relevant to your project.

Archival and special collections repositories exist in many forms, including national, regional or state repositories. Most collections related to the history of a public library, however, usually reside in local or regional repositories, for example a city or county archives, a local museum or perhaps even at the library itself (e.g., in a local history collection). Historical societies sometimes keep special research collections, though smaller societies tend not to create finding aids or maintain digital collections. Other local organizations (e.g., a church) sometimes maintain their own private archives which may also contain materials related to a public library's history. Contact these organizations first, however, as they are private organizations and may restrict who can view their collections.

The following are examples of archival and special research collections that contain records, papers or manuscripts relevant to projects about the African American history and the history of library services for African Americans. While completing the Roots of Community project, the author consulted materials from these and many other repositories to research the history of Carnegie-funded segregated branches. For each library included in the project, the author typically blocked at least one full week of time to examine collections. The project's website provides a complete list of these and other relevant collections (delineated by library).

Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Atlanta, Georgia. Part of the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System, the Auburn Avenue Research Library contains non-circulating research collections about the history of African Americans in the greater Atlanta region, including community leaders, groups and other African American organizations. The former Auburn Avenue branch library's records and the papers of one the branch's most influential librarians, Annie L. McPheeters, contain valuable information about Atlanta's former Auburn Avenue branch library.

Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. One of the region's oldest research institutions, the Georgia Historical Society is located downtown Savannah and contains many records, papers and manuscripts related to the history of the state. Though Savannah's Bull Street Library (a branch of the Live Oak Public Libraries) maintains helpful local history collections, the Georgia Historical Society maintains many valuable newspaper clippings collections and other materials directly relevant to the history of Savannah's former colored library (now the Carnegie Library branch on East Henry Street).

Nashville Metropolitan Government Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. Housed inside the Nashville Public Library's central building, Nashville's municipal archives contains many collections about the history of the greater Nashville area, including its African American community. It also preserves the Nashville Public Library's records, several series of which contain documents from the city's former colored branch (the Negro Public Library), once located on Twelfth Avenue at Hynes but closed in 1949.

Western Branch Library's African American Archives, Louisville, Kentucky. When it was established in 1905, Louisville's Colored Branch was one of the first library branches for African Americans in the South. Though desegregated in the 1950s, the Louisville Free Public Library maintains the Western Branch's Carnegie building of 1908, whose basement contains archival and special research collections related to the history of Louisville's black community, most specifically the city's Russell neighborhood. It also contains the papers of the Western Branch's first librarian, the Rev. Thomas Fountain Blue.

Government Documents

Government information can be considered primary if it appears in raw, unaltered form, or in some manner reasonably free from interpretation by other parties. An example might be demographic or other statistical data available from the United States Census Bureau, who has published *Statistical Abstracts of the United States* every year since 1878. And while genealogical methods lay outside the scope of this toolkit, birth, marriage and immigration records can offer useful details about a specific person, perhaps an important librarian or library user, including their date and place of birth, their occupation(s), where they lived and when, where they worked and when, to whom they were related, and so forth. Older, print-only government materials may still be available in a nearby Federal Depository Library; subscription services like Ancestry are another possibility and sometimes provide access to non-government sources like old city directories.

Sites: Buildings and Neighborhoods

Site visits to specific locations—particularly old library buildings and their neighborhoods—can reveal certain kinds of information, for example historical markers. However, observation of this kind is considered primary insofar as it reveals the site's present-day situation. Making inferences about the past based on a site's current condition and appearance can pose major problems. Part 2.2 of this toolkit provides more detail about these issues and uses several library-specific examples.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Secondary sources are the writings (usually published) of other historians or researchers who have used primary sources to inform their work. We call these sources "secondary" because, as works of scholarly interpretation, they remove historical information a full step away from its original state.

The secondary sources most relevant to your research will be the books and articles you gathered during your project's exploratory phase. But as your research continues, do not close yourself to additional secondary works. Often the number gathered during a project's exploratory phase accounts for only half (if not less) of all secondary works you will consult throughout the entire project. Secondary works not only help you position your project's objectives within the existing literature; they also map the completed journeys of others who have navigated the same scholarly terrain. So, assuming they include source notes and bibliographies, these works can help you identify sources you otherwise would not have discovered.

Scholarly vs. Non-Academic Works

Since it will not always be possible to cite a primary source, you can cite a secondary one instead, provided it meets certain conditions. Always give priority to academic (scholarly) publications, as these cite their sources not just thoroughly but also meticulously. Corroborate, if possible, similar claims based on the same evidence in works of comparable quality. Avoid citing "trade" books, however more engaging (and often better illustrated) them may seem. Often written for non-academic readers, these works seldom cite their information sources as thoroughly as academic ones do (a simple bibliography on the last page is hardly enough) and seldom do their authors have much experience in scholarly methods. If you must cite a non-academic work, do so but with caution and only when a more reliable source is not readily available.

The following works provide an overview of the **development of public libraries** in the western world, particularly in late 19th and early 20th century America:

- Garrison, Dee. *Apostles of Culture: The Public Library and American Society, 1876-1920*. New York: New York Free Press, 1979.
- Harris, Michael. *A History of Libraries in the Western World*, 4th edition. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999.
- Martin, Lowell. *Enrichment: A History of the Public Library in the United States in the Twentieth Century*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998.
- Pawley, Christine and Louise S. Robbins. *Libraries and the Reading Public in Twentieth Century America*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013.
- Quinn, Mary Ellen. *The Historical Dictionary of Librarianship*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014.
- Van Slyck, Abigail A. *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890-1920.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Wiegand, Wayne. *Main Street Public Library: Community Places and Reading Spaces in the Rural Heartland, 1876-1956*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014.
- Wiegand, Wayne. *Part of Our Lives: A People's History of the American Public Library*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Several **academic journals** currently publish work about the history of libraries: *Library and Information History*, published by Taylor & Francis; *Libraries: Culture, History and Society*, published by Penn State University Press; and *Information and Culture: A Journal of History*, published by the University of Texas Press. The contents of past and/or defunct journals, for instance the *Journal of Library History*, are often available through online services like JSTOR.

For information about the history of **libraries for African Americans** specifically, including information about early black literary societies, the following sources may be of interest:

- Battles, David M. *The History of Public Library Access for African Americans in the South*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009.
- Knott, Cheryl. *Not Free, Not for All: Public Libraries in the Age of Jim Crow*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015.
- Graham, Patterson Toby. *A Right to Read: Segregation and Civil Rights in Alabama's Public Libraries, 1900-1965*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002.
- Jones, Reinette F. *Library Service to African Americans in Kentucky*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002.
- McHenry, Elizabeth. *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Tucker, John Mark (ed.). *Untold Stories: Civil Rights, Libraries and Black Librarianship*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1998.
- Wiegand, Wayne and Shirley A. Wiegand. *The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South: Civil Rights and Local Activism.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018.

ORAL HISTORIES

Some projects might also involve interviews with participants of past events. Such interviews are usually called *oral histories*. "Oral history" means the systematic collection of information about a person's life and experiences via personal interview. As a research method, it differs substantially from traditional, qualitative interviewing methods.

Seldom can oral histories cover the entirety of a person's life, however. Though broad in approach, oral history interviews focus on firsthand experiences related to a specific time, place or event. Repositories typically classify completed oral histories by multiple subjects or themes, making their discovery easy for researchers. Whether oral histories are primary or secondary sources, however, depends on several conditions. At best, oral histories are neither, but may be considered more primary than secondary depending on how directly a participant was involved in a specific event and, perhaps more importantly, how soon the interview was completed after the event in question. As Part 2.3 of this toolkit discusses, the distance of time often obscures accuracy; even firsthand participants will remember an experience differently decades after the experience is over. In many cases, researchers must take it on faith that a participant's testimony is accurate and thus also reliable.

In any event, researchers wanting to use oral histories for their research have two options. First, they may rely entirely on existing oral histories—that is, interviews completed by previous researchers and donated to a repository; or they may conduct new interviews specific to their project's goals. While it is entirely possible to use both options, most researchers choose only the first given its obvious advantages. But when no relevant existing oral histories can be found, a researcher might consider completing original interviews. Part 2.3 of this toolkit covers oral history interviewing with greater detail, including interviewing techniques and the preparation of an oral history program at your library.

When seeking existing oral histories, keep the following points in mind. First, interviews as published in newspapers, magazines or books are not oral histories, not even if the interview seems complete or unaltered. You can quote from these sources but exercise caution. Many of them quote selectively, order quotations out of sequence and seldom reproduce more than just a fraction of the complete interview. Oral histories, by contrast, are complete, unaltered and reproduce an interview in real time, either in audio or textual form (if not both). Indeed, when seeking archived oral histories, give priority to interviews available in both formats. Listening to and reading an interview simultaneously will allow you to verify the transcript's accuracy and completeness.

Louisville and the Western Colored Branch Library:

Baker, Houston A. (2017-02-27, audio, ROC Project Collections)

Edwards-Hunter, Karen (2017-04-25, audio, ROC Project Collections)

Hutchins, Walter T. (1999-00-00, KHS Collections)

Meridian and the 13th Street Colored Library:

Turner, Maxine (2017-01-12, audio, ROC Project Collections)

Wilson, Jerome (2016-11-19, audio, ROC Project Collections)

Detail from the Roots of Community's project website, which contains an online archive for completed interviews. Interview transcripts are available as PDFs with audio streaming. Interviews are organized by library and, where available, include links to additional oral history interviews contained in other online collections.

PART 2

GATHERING

Archival Sources, Site Visits and

Oral History Approaches

2.1. ARCHIVAL SOURCES

LIBRARY RECORDS

When researching the history of a public library, you should first locate that library's records. These will contain all kinds of information about past programs and services, users and membership, collections and circulation, librarians and staff, facilities and equipment, projects and initiatives, and so forth. They may also contain information about the library's ongoing relationship with its governing bodies, national or regional professional associations, and the wider public.

A public library's records are most frequently stored at the archives of its governing body. So, in most cases, this will mean the local municipal or county archives. Sometimes very large public libraries will store their records in-house, for instance as part of a local history collection. Sometimes the papers of notable past directors, librarians and other staff members will also survive, though their whereabouts can vary. (For more about this, see "Further Considerations" later in this chapter.)

Before they were allowed access to free, tax-supported libraries, many African Americans organized membership-based library associations, literary societies or other similar clubs. Assuming such records survive, these organizations' archives may be of interest, since they can reveal the prehistory of what later became a segregated library branch. Locating these records is usually difficult, however, if not altogether impossible. But consider several strategies. In cases where a Colored Library Association was subsequently absorbed by a city's larger (white) free library system, sometimes that larger public library also acquired the Library Association's records as a result. Check the public library's records first; they may well include some of the Colored Library Association's original records. Alternatively, these records were sometimes merged with the files of the library association's last serving custodian, or even the papers of a former board member. These papers may still be available, though possibly in a different collection.

Similar challenges emerge when researching "colored libraries" that were originally separate from their city's larger library system. These typically maintained their own, exclusively African American trustees: Houston's Colored Carnegie Library, Savannah's Henry Street Library and Meridian's 13th Street Library, for example, were all originally separate but later merged with their city's main public library system during integration in the 1950s and 1960s. In many such cases, the former colored library's records were absorbed into the larger public library's and thus survive in their archives. But in some cases, such records were discarded after the merger.

When library records do survive, they often comprise a variety of source types, including old annual reports, board minutes, internal and external correspondence, historical photographs, library catalogs or borrowing registers, items related to past programs and services, old newspaper clippings, and even personnel records. Below is an overview of the kinds of sources you will probably find most valuable, especially if you are researching libraries as places of community.

Annual Reports

These summary reports usually circulated as staple-bound booklets or folded pamphlets. They often opened with a greeting or essay by the library's Director, highlighting the institution's most notable accomplishments of the previous year. These "greetings" statements can offer important clues about a library's operations but usually require further archival digging to substantiate.

Annual reports are usually the best sources for borrowing and circulation statistics (sometimes delineated by library branch, then by month) as well as detailed financial figures, including information about public (taxation) sources and any private funding the library may have also received (Carnegie grants, for example). They may also contain images, usually photographs of new library buildings, personnel or other major events. While often published by the library's trustees, annual reports were usually the responsibility of the library's Director or Chief Librarian, though their names did not always appear on the title page. Remember also that while reports were typically printed for a specific year, they were usually prepared and published early the following calendar year. It is therefore important not to confuse the year of report with its year of publication.

Some libraries with multiple branches would prepare an annual report for the entire system but also separate reports for each branch. These branch reports often contained greater detail about each branch's circulation, programs, services, personnel and facilities. This is especially important when researching the origins of colored libraries that operated as a branch within a larger city system. Determine as best you can whether the colored branch ever circulated its own, dedicated annual reports and try as best you can to locate those first.

Board Minutes

As detailed records of meetings among trustees, board minutes typically include details of discussions, decisions and actions related to library policies and operations. Even more valuable is the information they contain about disagreements between members, challenges or complaints from the public, and even courses of action the board may have considered but did not take. Original board minutes can also contain supplemental, laid-in items usually unavailable elsewhere: letters from librarians or library users, old bulletins, newspaper clippings and sometimes even original photographs.

Most library boards a century ago recorded their meeting minutes by hand, usually in ledger books or small notebooks. Later boards would type their minutes and kept them in a folder or a binder. But whether they are ledger books, notebooks or files, seek the most original copies of meeting minutes whenever possible, since these are almost always the most reliable. Though local newspapers often covered board meetings, reporters usually summarized proceedings and seldom do these articles offer the same detail as the original records do. Also beware of typed transcriptions of past minutes, since they often postdate the handwritten originals by many years and were not always verbatim transcriptions but, like newspaper reports, merely summarized the information. Use newspaper articles or transcriptions only when necessary and, if possible, corroborate what they report with other primary sources.

Operational Records

Though annual reports usually include similar information, sometimes original membership registers or even circulation (borrowing) ledgers will turn up in archival collections. Seldom do such records survive in complete series, however; extant examples are often limited to a range of months or years. Moreover,

Excerpts from the **New Orleans Public Library's annual reports ca. 1914-20**, including the cover of the library's 1914-15 report (below, left), basic expenditures and personnel information (below, right) and, from the 1920 report, a summary comparison (bottom) of juvenile fiction circulation among all the system's branches. This report contained similar comparison tables for several types of literature.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

New Orleans Public Library

Fisk Library

Simon Hernsheim Library

1914-1915

DRYADES BRANCH (COLORED).

Dryades Branch—		
Salaries	1,415.00	
Heating	8.20	
Printing and stationery	74.13	
General expenses	82.63—	1,579.96

Dryades Branch (Colored).

Adelia Trent, Assistant in Charge.
Anita L. Johnson, Assistant.
E. E. Swan, Janitor.

Circulation of Juvenile Fiction, Central Library and Branches, 1916-1920.

TABLE 5.

	1916.	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.
Central Library	30,836	29,306	28,489	32,377	33,783
Royal Branch	15,141	17,211	15,379	16,025	16,730
Algiers Branch	8,604	8,183	8,279	8,675	12,611
Napoleon Branch	15,632	16,439	16,541	15,530	13,396
Canal Branch	14,190	13,481	15,984	16,272	17,063
Dryades Branch	1,689	2,478	2,634	2,538	2,263
Totals	86,092	87,098	87,306	91,417	95,846

The **Louisville Free Public Library's annual report for 1914** was the library's first to include information about its Eastern Colored Branch, which had opened in January of that year. Excerpts (below) include photographs of the new branch (exterior and interior) plus information about its opening day collection, early circulation, library clubs and even a list of community groups and associations that had used the branch for meetings (bottom).

EASTERN COLORED BRANCH LIBRARY

Carnegie building opened January 28, 1914

Cost

Building construction	$19,250.81
Furniture	1,273.50
	$20,524.31
Cost of site	5,000.00
	$25,524.31
Volumes in library on opening day 2,117—value	2,211.12
Total	$27,735.43

Gift of Andrew Carnegie $19,895.38

Volumes in library 2,171

Circulation of books February 1914	1,969
Circulation of books March 1914	3,004
Total circulation for the two months	4,973

Average monthly circulation for two months 2,487 Volumes

The opening of the second colored branch has not affected the circulation at the other branch. There was an increase in circulation at the Western Colored Branch for the two months. This shows that additional readers have been reached by the new branch.

The following clubs and reading circles meet regularly in rooms in the building. Similar organizations are being formed for the Eastern Colored Branch.

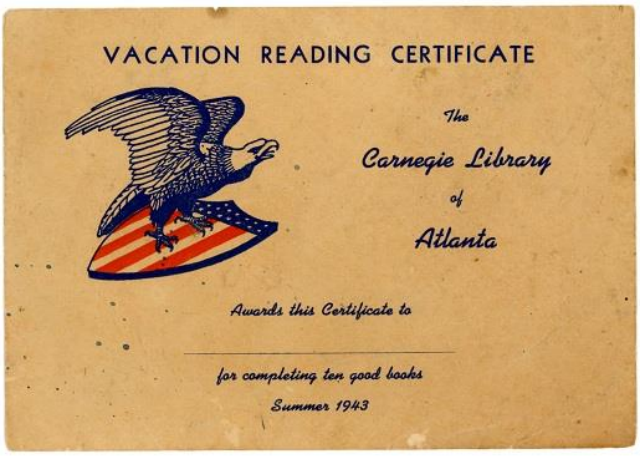
Bannecker Reading Circle
Dunbar Literary Club
Girls' Reading Club
Story Hour
Wilberforce Club
Douglass Debating Club
Fisk Club
Normal Alumni
Sunday School Training Class
Y. W. C. A.

The State Medical Association, Business League, Annual Conference of the Y. M. C. A., State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, Teachers' Institute and other gatherings were held in the Assembly Room during the year.

The Story Hour is popular at all the libraries. It is held weekly at the Main library and at the two colored branches, and monthly at the other branches. The attendance is usually greater than the seating capacity of the assembly rooms. At the Main library the story is often repeated two or three times the same afternoon.

An annual story telling contest is held at the Western Colored Branch in May or June, and it is always a great day for the colored children. A movement is on foot to form a colored organization to be known as the Story Hour League and it is intended to interest the children of other States in the work.

they tend to be messy and are sometimes even illegible. But depending on their completeness, these sources can help identify specific borrowers, for example important local figures. They can also show which books or even which genres circulated most or least within a specific period. In any case, for broader, more complete information about library membership and book circulation, consult the library's annual reports. Pamphlets or lists of recommended titles (usually prepared by genre or subject) show the kinds of books a library contained, but they never represent a library's entire catalog. Seldom do catalogs survive in their entirety.



Carnegie Library of Atlanta summer reading program completion certificate, summer 1943.

Correspondence Files

Library records often contain letters of different kinds, either internal communications (from employee to employee) or external messages to or from members of the public, community leaders, or even librarians from other libraries. Most libraries kept carbon copies of the letters they mailed, and usually filed their letter's response alongside their copy of the original letter. More than a century later, such order makes it easy for researchers to understand relationships between correspondents, though not all records are so well ordered. Libraries also filed correspondence in different places and for different reasons: sometimes by year; sometimes by correspondent or program. Even if a library's correspondence files survive as their own group or series, letters and memoranda can turn up anywhere in a library's records.

Letters also contain useful material information, like letterheads and original signatures. Letterheads can help determine important dates, addresses and contact information. Correspondence files can also contain laid-in items like photographs, newspaper clippings, invitations, and event programs. Sometimes these are the only extant copies, so if a laid-in item offers valuable information, add it to you research notes but also note precisely where you found it: the collection name and number, series number, folder number and so forth.

Personnel Records

Personnel records can also contain correspondence related to specific librarians and staff. But they normally contain many other items, from a librarian's original job application to various performance evaluations, test results, degrees or other qualifications. They may also document a librarian's retirement, departure for another job—or in some cases, a librarian or staff member's termination.

Be careful, however, of any information you collect from such records. Even when decades old, archival records may still contain confidential or other potentially sensitive forms of information about people. Not all repositories necessarily remove or block access to this information, so researchers should not assume that anything found in old, archival records is necessarily information they can share publicly. For more information about this and similar issues, check the handbooks and guides listed in Part 1.1 or speak with an archivist, curator or other professional at the appropriate repository.

The New York Public Library
Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundations

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR,
ASTOR LIBRARY BUILDING, 40 LAFAYETTE PLACE.

New York, Sept. 7, 1901.

Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Gentlemen:-

A recent examination of the files of this Library shows that of your publications we have only Annual reports 1 to 2 (July 1890-91) 3 to 10 (June 1892-99), and I write to ask if copies of all later reports and publications of the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway cannot be forwarded to this Library, as I am particularly desirous of completing our collection of railway publications. I would also ask to have the name of the New York Public Library put upon your mailing list to receive copies of all future issues. I enclose an addressed postal card for reply.

Thanking you in advance for a favorable consideration of this request, I remain,

Very respectfully,

John S. Billings

Director.

Sept 18/1901

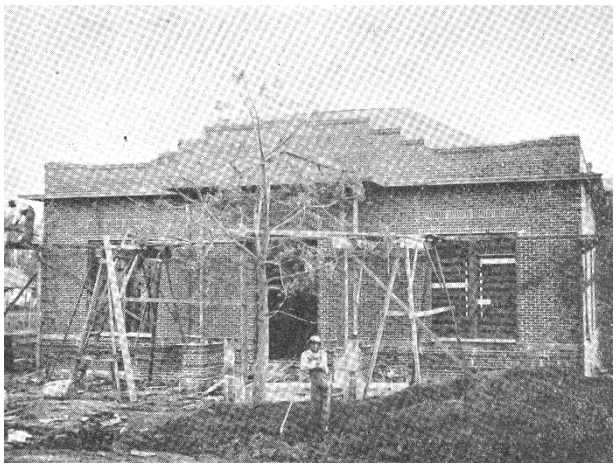
A typed letter from John Shaw Billings, Director of the New York Public Library, dated September 1901 and hand-signed at the bottom. Though its message reveals nothing significant, as an artifact the letter shows how library correspondence appeared in the early 20th century. High-ranking managers typically used stationery customized to their office or library branch. Letterheads often included street addresses, office numbers—and later, telephone numbers. Messages were often typed but with corrections or other emendations added by hand.

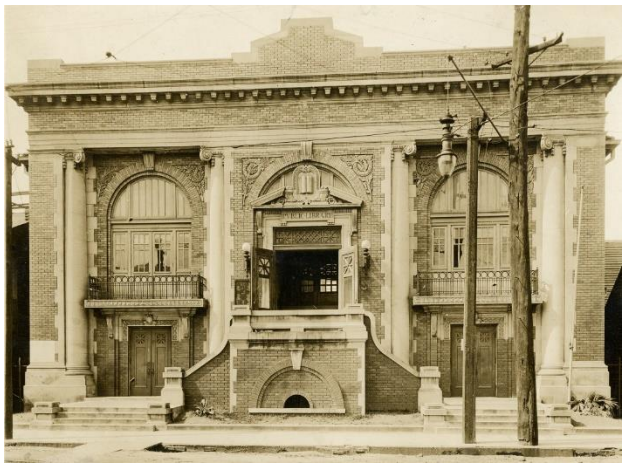
VISUAL RECORDS

Historical images can reveal much about a library's past. At least a few historical images likely survive of the library you are researching, although these can be difficult to locate. Typical examples include photographs of a library's construction or opening ceremonies, its reading rooms, programs like storytime or the meeting of a debate club, its librarians and/or staff, a community meeting in its basement auditorium, or perhaps even the library building's demolition.

Photographs

Historical images exist in various form. The most common are original photographic prints or negatives. Repositories sometimes make digitized versions of these available to the general public for access and preservation reasons. Photos published in books or other secondary sources are usually reliable, though sometimes publishers will crop or alter photographs to suit a book's layout. It is therefore good practice to examine original prints or negatives whenever possible.





Top, left: A rare image of the Mound Bayou, Mississippi Carnegie library under construction. Only about three images of this library are known to survive. Top, right: An original print of New Orleans's newly completed Dryades Branch, circa 1916-17, showing exterior ornamentation later lost to fires, hurricanes and subsequent remodeling of the building into a school. Bottom: One of the earliest photographs taken of Thomas F. Blue after he became librarian of Louisville's Colored (later Western Colored) Branch. Around him are several assistants, including Rachel Harris who would later become librarian of the city's Eastern Colored Branch.

To determine a photograph's date, first check the collection's finding aid. Hopefully it will identify a years or range of years. If so, you may feel satisfied that the date in the finding aid is accurate. But because finding aids are not primary sources, you may wish to corroborate this date with other sources if possible. You might consider whether copies of the same photograph survive in other repositories and, if so, whether another repository's description may provide date information for comparison. If the photograph depicts a special event, sometimes other documentary sources (annual reports, meeting minutes or correspondence, for example) will reveal a specific or approximate date.

On the other hand, if no documentary sources explicitly offer a date, then you may determine an approximate period (e.g., a decade or range of years) based on your own examination of the image. If the image shows people, then first consider their fashions, particularly their clothing and hairstyles. If the image shows a library's interior, examine furnishings or forms of technology. For example, a photograph of a library user playing a small, portable record-player would probably not predate the mid-1950s. If the image shows the library's exterior, look for automobiles: their make, model and/or period of manufacture may help you at least determine a specific decade. Also look for structural additions or other major changes to the library building. If you know when these changes where completed, their presence (or absence) in the image may help you determine whether the photo was taken before or after a particular year. Do not rely on photographer's stamps (sometimes on the backs of prints) for date information, as photo studios sometimes made prints years after the original negative was captured.

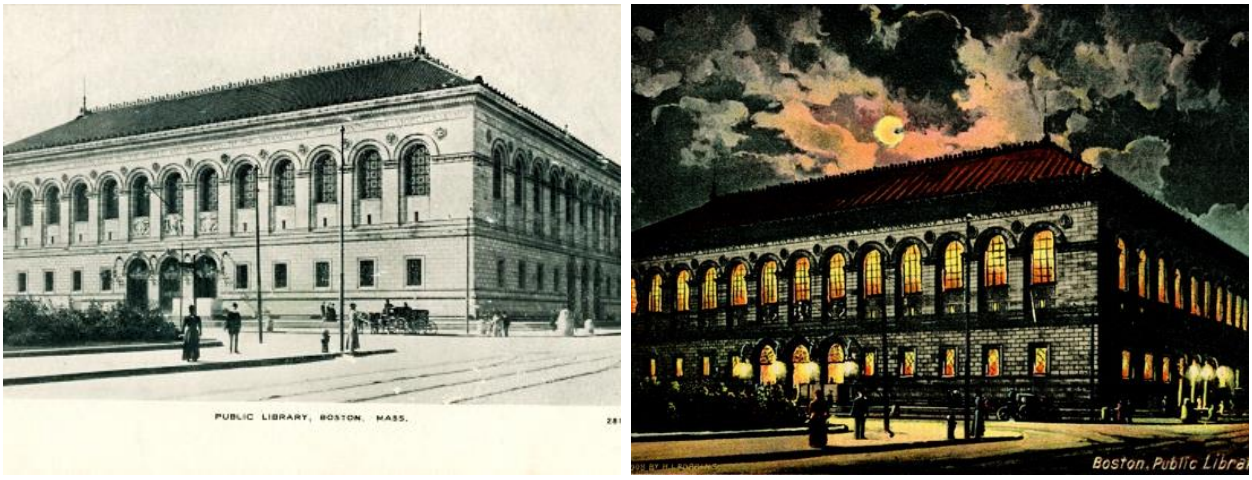
The exact date of this photograph remains unknown. It shows children viewing stereographs inside Evansville's Cherry Street Branch. An Evansville Courier *article from 1920, which reported that the library had received a donation of stereographs for use in children's programs, suggested at first that this photograph dated from the early 1920s. Yet clues within the image itself suggest a much later date, for example the children's fashions and the type of film stock used to capture the photo. Moreover, the linoleum covering the library's original hardwood floor was common in library renovations around the mid-century. All this suggests a date closer to the late 1940s or early 1950s.*

Postcards

Old picture postcards of libraries are also commonplace and can be just as valuable as photographs. But while postcard illustrations offer similar information as old photos, in most cases the two media are not interchangeable. Photographic prints are normally accurate reproductions of their original negatives. But not postcards. Although some cards were printed as small, postcard-sized photographs (a type known as a "real photograph postcard"), most postcard illustrations printed between 1900 and 1945 were mass-produced lithographically. And while often based on original photographs, postcard views frequently underwent much alteration at the printing stage, from artificial colorization to all sorts of additions and other enhancements. People, cars and even architectural features not in the original photograph were often added to the postcard version. So, as a rule, unless you are studying old postcard representations of libraries, do not consider postcard illustrations as primary as original photographs.

Though postcard views of public libraries were once very common, those of colored public libraries were not, even during the medium's "golden period" (ca. 1900 to 1920). Views of black college libraries are slightly more common, however, usually because those colleges published the cards themselves. Still, some views of colored public libraries exist (for example, the view of Louisville's Western Colored Branch that appears in this toolkit's "Introduction").

Dating postcards is often easier than dating photographs and collector's guides contain useful information about postcard periodization: the Pioneer Era (1898-1900), the Golden Age (1900-1920), the White Border Era (1921-29), the Linen Era (1930s) and the Chrome Era (1940s to 1960s). Physical characteristics specific to these periods—a card's size, colorization style and paper type, for example—can help determine the card's approximate age. Postcards and their images do not always share the same birthdate, however, and researchers may have to locate a copy of the original photograph to be sure. Printed copyright dates were not uncommon on early postcards, but when they did appear these dates often applied to the card's design and not necessarily its image. The backs of mailed cards should include a dated cancel, though these only indicate when the card was mailed (not necessarily the date of its image).



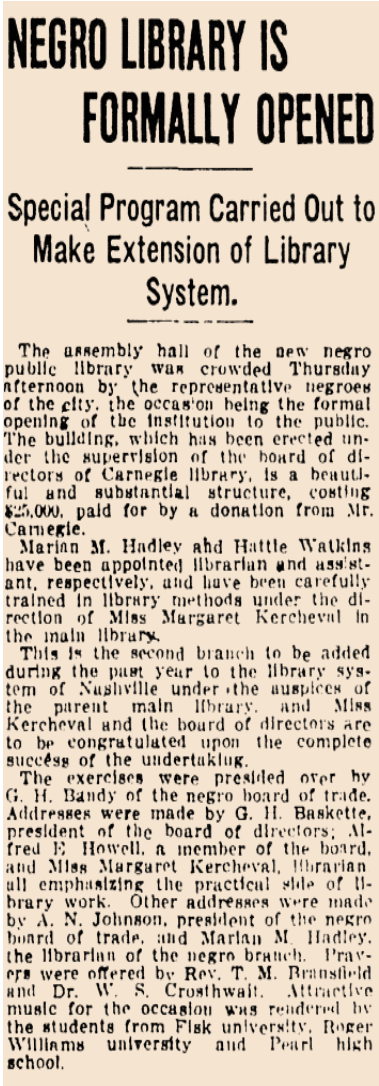
Details from two postcards of the Boston Public Library at Copley Square, both printed ca. 1907-1910 and based on the same photograph. Although the original photograph was captured in daytime, the view at right has been transformed into a night view. But even the view at left, though more faithful to the original photograph, seems to have also been retouched. For instance, the two figures in the foreground, standing on the sidewalk at center-left, appear to have been added by a printer's paintbrush.

NEWSPAPER SOURCES

Public libraries routinely clipped and saved articles from local newspapers about library-related news and events. They sometimes glued these clippings into scrapbooks, which can turn up in old library records or in the papers of former librarians or trustees. By the mid-century, however, most libraries kept their news clippings in vertical files. Luckily, many of these collections survive though they can be difficult for researchers to locate, since few public libraries maintain such collections anymore.

Newspapers on Microform

You may browse old newspapers using an old-fashioned (analog) microform viewer. But this method is time consuming and, unless you read *everything*, the chances of missing relevant articles is high. Perhaps the best strategy is to begin with a list of key events and their dates and search for articles about those. As your research progresses, you will likely return and search for articles about other key events.



NEGRO LIBRARY IS FORMALLY OPENED

Special Program Carried Out to Make Extension of Library System.

The assembly hall of the new negro public library was crowded Thursday afternoon by the representative negroes of the city, the occasion being the formal opening of the institution to the public. The building, which has been erected under the supervision of the board of directors of Carnegie library, is a beautiful and substantial structure, costing $25,000, paid for by a donation from Mr. Carnegie.

Marian M. Hadley and Hattie Watkins have been appointed librarian and assistant, respectively, and have been carefully trained in library methods under the direction of Miss Margaret Kercheval in the main library.

This is the second branch to be added during the past year to the library system of Nashville under the auspices of the parent main library, and Miss Kercheval and the board of directors are to be congratulated upon the complete success of the undertaking.

The exercises were presided over by G. H. Bandy of the negro board of trade. Addresses were made by G. H. Baskette, president of the board of directors; Alfred E. Howell, a member of the board, and Miss Margaret Kercheval, librarian all emphasizing the practical side of library work. Other addresses were made by A. N. Johnson, president of the negro board of trade, and Marian M. Hadley, the librarian of the negro branch. Prayers were offered by Rev. T. M. Bransfield and Dr. W. S. Crosthwait. Attractive music for the occasion was rendered by the students from Fisk university, Roger Williams university and Pearl high school.

Newspaper clipping from the February 11, 1916 issue of the Tennessean *announcing the opening of Nashville's Negro Public Library.*

Newspaper Databases

Many libraries can access old newspapers—from major dailies like the *New York Times* to local newspapers long since discontinued—through online subscriptions. A well-known example is ProQuest's Historical Newspapers, which includes digitized (PDF) back issues of over 3,000 daily newspapers, most of them American. Academic vendors like ProQuest traditionally do not offer subscriptions to individual researchers, however; they deal primarily with libraries and other research centers. Moreover, since these databases are commercial, libraries must restrict their use (particularly off campus use) only to current members of the subscribing library and/or its parent institution. Libraries will sometimes allow non-members access but only if they visit the library in person and obtain a temporary borrower's card.

Still, some commercial, non-academic vendors offer individual subscriptions to historical newspaper databases: Newspapers.com and/or NewspaperArchive.com, for example, may offer materials relevant to your project. Fortunately, many cultural institutions make digitized newspapers publicly available and without charge. For example, the Library of Congress's Chronicling America project, funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities, offers online access to hundreds of American newspapers ca. 1789 to 1963. Wikipedia also maintains an international list of all available online newspaper databases, many of which are American and most of which do not require payment.

Many databases provide access to past African American newspapers. For example, ProQuest's databases include the *Atlanta Daily World*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, the *Chicago Defender*, the *Cleveland Call & Post*, the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, the *New York Amsterdam News*, the *Norfolk Journal & Guide*, the *Philadelphia Tribune* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Though nearly all were major dailies, these papers still reported

news from small towns in their regions. Of the non-commercial alternatives, at least 72 of the newspapers in the Library of Congress's Chronicling America database are African American papers, albeit coverage is very limited. Other open databases, like Fulton History, include national-level African American papers like the *New York Age*. Some university archives have digitized and integrated local black newspapers into their online digital collections. The University of Southern Indiana's Archives and Special Collections, for example, provides free, online access to selected copies of the *Evansville Argus*.

But be aware of newspaper articles' limitations. Even generations ago, newspapers had political leanings and agendas. And libraries, though politically neutral, tended to collect clippings that placed them in a favorable (or at least sympathetic) light. So, when seeking information from old newspaper sources, never limit your search just to vertical files or scrapbooks from library collections.

OTHER ARCHIVAL SOURCES

You can often locate additional information about a library's past in archival collections not directly related to the library. Below are the most typical examples.

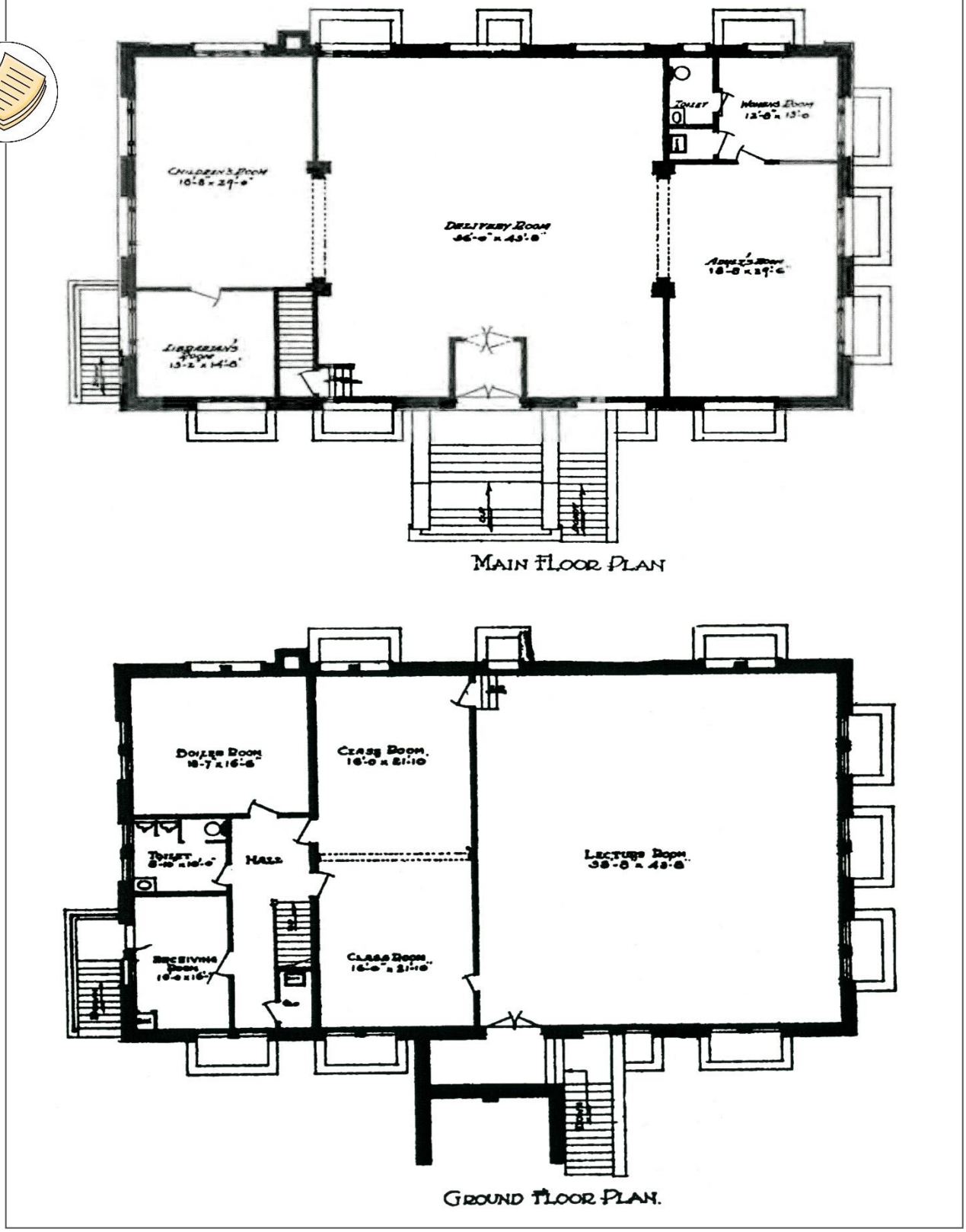
Architectural Records

You can find much information about a library building's design, planning and construction in several different types of sources. Period newspaper articles, for example, can offer much detail, from building committee decisions, architectural competitions, design phases and the laying of cornerstones to the library's opening, dedication ceremony, later renovations (if any) and—as is so often the case—the library's closure or demolition. Although old newspapers often reveal political biases, their accounts offer rich, firsthand details most other sources do not.

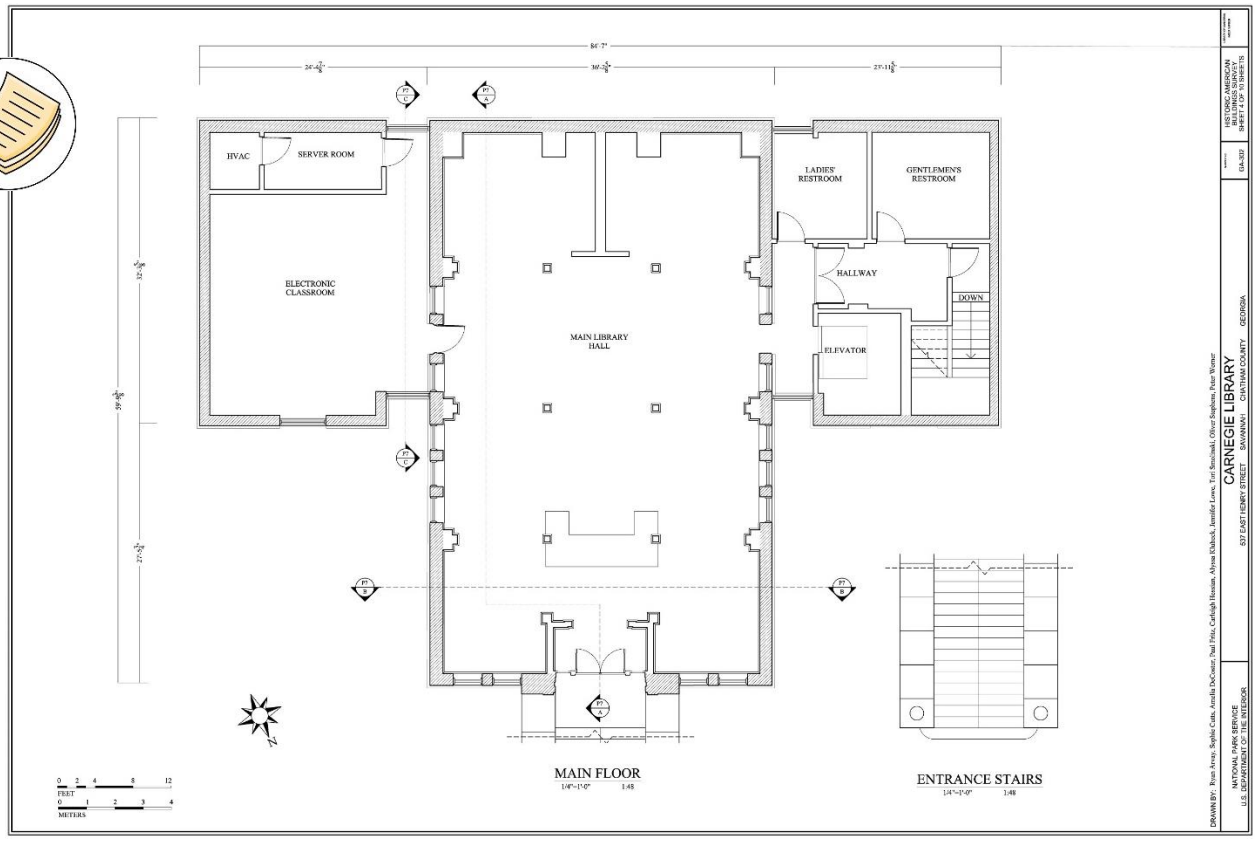
Architectural records (original blueprints most specifically) can offer invaluable technical information about library buildings, for instance building and room dimensions and even exterior details like landscaping and the original locations of public entrances. Many plans label the original functions of a library's rooms: the stack rooms, reading rooms, lecture rooms, librarian offices, storage spaces, and so forth. Rarely do blueprints include much about furnishings or equipment, as library architects normally designed just the building and not its contents.

In the early to mid-20th century, most architects prepared two types of blueprints: floor plans, which were two-dimensional, birds-eye-view drawings of a single level; and elevation plans, which showed a building's exterior usually one sketch per building side. Some blueprints even included an "architect's brief"—a textual description of the finished building, including details of the brick, stone and wood used in the final construction.

But be careful. Architects usually kept everything, not just final plans. So, their extant records frequently include aborted designs and other unused materials, and sometimes these were for projects the architect never completed. Sometimes a library would hire an architect just to design an addition or expansion, so a blueprint may not be for the original structure but instead for an addition completed decades later. Since most blueprints are dated, these types of plans are easy to spot. Also be careful of dates and inscriptions on the building itself, if it survives: dates engraved above entrances or on cornerstones often record the date of a library's establishment, or the year the cornerstone was laid, not necessarily the date the library building was completed or opened to the public.



Above are plans for the proposed Colored (later Western Colored) Branch, as published in the Louisville Free Library's annual report for 1907. Be careful when obtaining plans from such sources: although these designs were indeed the work of McDonald and Dodd (the branch's architects), they do not show the building's final layout. The library's annual report for 1906 showed an even different set of plans for the proposed branch. Final plans for library buildings typically reside in architectural collections, specifically the architect's company records.



Above are selected architectural drawings from the renovation and expansion (ca. 2001-04) of the former colored Carnegie library in Savannah, Georgia. These plans, which comprise ten separate drawings of the building, were found in the Library of Congress's Historic American Buildings Survey *collections. They only show the building post-renovation, however, and not as it originally appeared in 1914.*

Cornerstones can be helpful but be aware of what their dates mean. Take for example the cornerstones of Louisville's Western Colored Branch (left) and New Orleans's Dryades Branch (right). The former was founded in 1905, its cornerstone laid in 1907 and the building completed in 1908. The Dryades Branch was established in 1913, its cornerstone laid in 1914 and the building completed in 1915. In both cases, the engraved year denotes only the cornerstone's date, not the building's date of completion.

Architectural records are usually kept in archival collections and are organized by architect name, either the name of an individual architect or an architectural firm. These collections typically reside in repositories not far from the architect's last or most current address. So, first seek the name of the architect or firm before you seek any surviving records. If you do not know the architect's name, check records that date from the same time as the building project: for example, the library's annual reports, board meeting minutes, internal correspondence, and contemporary newspaper articles.

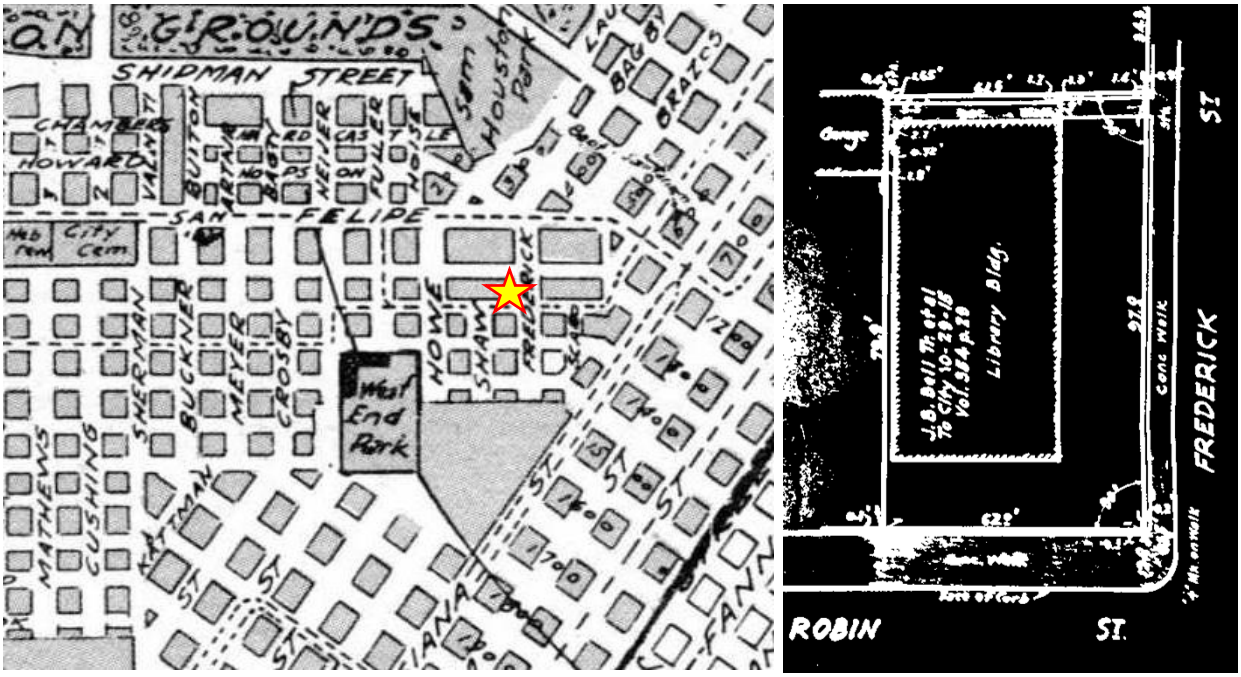
With a few, rare exceptions, seldom were African American architects hired to design libraries for blacks, especially if the library building was part of a publicly funded system in a predominantly white community.

Map Collections

Old city maps, including property surveys, can show precisely where a former library once stood. They can also show the library's location relative to other important organizations and institutions, like schools, churches, and community associations. Surveys of library lots and sites sometimes turn up in library records, but old city maps typically reside in municipal, county and/or state archival collections.

Memoirs

Personal memoirs composed by librarians, long-serving library trustees or other prominent community members may contain remembrances of a specific library. Some memoirs were originally published as books, but many more survive as unpublished manuscripts in archival collections. Personal memoirs pose the same accuracy risks as interviews, however, especially if the writer is recalling events long after they occurred. Arguably, a personal memoir can be even less reliable than an interview since, in addition to any time-distance issues, the writer may have selected their words even more carefully. So, as written testimony, their coverage of specific events can be very selective, however inadvertently. Never base your understanding or interpretation of a specific event solely on a single person's testimony. But in the absence of an interview, a personal memoir can reveal important firsthand accounts of places and events related to a library's past.



At left is part of an old map of downtown Houston, Texas and shows what is known today as the city's Fourth Ward. At right is an old survey drawing of the Houston Colored Carnegie Library's former location on the southeast corner of Frederick and Robin streets. The yellow star (added for this demonstration) shows the site's exact location on the city map. Yet much of this neighborhood changed in the 1960s during the city's Clay Street Extension project, which included the construction of an interstate. These maps are among the few left that show exactly where the library stood.

When seeking a librarian's published memoir, first use WorldCat.org to search the holdings of libraries in your region. Such memoirs were seldom published for wide readership; so, if original copies survive, they will probably reside near you, perhaps in a public or college library's local history or rare book collection. That library may lend you their copy via interloan services; but in most cases, you will have to visit that library to access their copy of the book. Alternatively, you may find a reasonably priced secondhand copy via marketplaces like Abebooks or eBay.

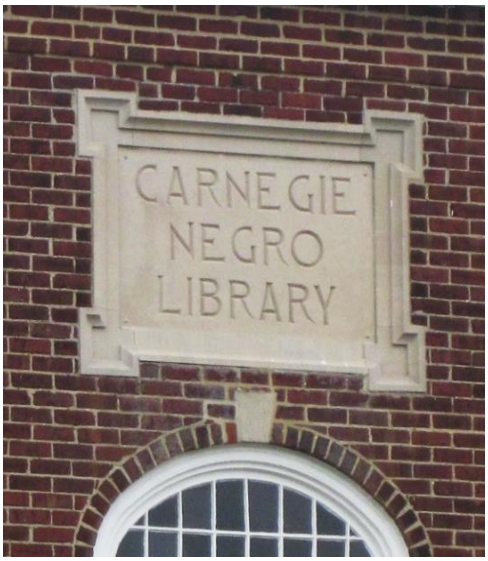
Some librarians—even black librarians in the early to mid-20th century—published personal accounts of library-related events in professional journals. Search contemporary issues of *Library Journal* or any state-level librarian journals or newsletters. If not accessible electronically, many of these periodicals survive as bound volumes with indexes searchable by author or library name.

Two examples of published works by African American librarians include: Annie L. McPheeters's *Library Service in Black and White: Some Personal Recollections, 1912-1980* (Scarecrow Press, 1988); and J. Herman Daves's *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee* (1926) which, though not written as a personal memoir, is a self-published account of the author's work with and knowledge of Knoxville's African American community, including its Free Colored Library (for which Daves served as librarian for ten years). Also consider the memoirs of famous former users: Houston A. Baker, the acclaimed scholar and former member of Louisville's Western Colored Branch, and Clarence Thomas, Supreme Court Justice and former member of Savannah's colored library, both included remembrances of those libraries in their published memoirs.

2.2. SITE VISITS

Old library buildings and their surrounding neighborhoods can reveal valuable information, though as sources of historical information they are often limited. If the building still functions as a library, it should be reasonably easy to access; but even if getting inside is impossible, there is much to observe just from the sidewalk. When this author was researching Louisville's Eastern Colored Branch (closed in 1975 and now in private ownership), he could observe only the building's exterior. He still learned much about the library's general design, its ornamentation and exterior points of access. This was valuable information, given how floorplans for that library never turned up in any archival collections.

Library interiors can offer physical evidence like extant furnishings, equipment or even collections from a specific period. An original librarian's charging desk, for example, if still in its original location, can provide a sense of a librarian's day-to-day experience (or at least their placement within the library's layout); commemorative "opening day" plaques erected in a library's foyer sometimes reveal the names of community members or groups that raised funds for the library's construction; and books extant from specific historical periods can reveal traces of a library's past identity, for instance book plates, identifying stamps or charging cards, all of which can show how a library identified itself, marked ownership of its property, or tracked use of its collections.



Left: The original oak charging desk of the East Branch library in Evansville, Indiana, which was manufactured by the Library Bureau and is still in its original, central location on the library's main floor. Right: The original sign of Greensboro, North Carolina's former Carnegie Negro Library. Although the library's name changed after 1924, it remains permanently engraved above the library's front entrance.

Observations of a library's urban surroundings can also help, especially if other buildings from the same historical period also survive. The location of a librarian's personal residence, a public school or a recreational center relative to a library's address can provide a sense of spatial proximities—an important but often neglected community dynamic, as most early visitors reached their library by foot. If period residences survive, these can reveal clues about a neighborhood's past socio-economic status, especially if their original size and architectural style are still apparent.

2.3. ORAL HISTORY APPROACHES

Put simply, oral history is the documentation and interpretation of a person's firsthand testimony of historical events. This is usually done via an audio- and/or video-recorded interview, not just for public sharing but also for permanent inclusion in research collections, so that future generations may learn from the interviews. For historical researchers, conducting oral history interviews can be a welcome break from archival research, as they tend to humanize historical events far more than documentary sources do. But they are also difficult to do and do well. Some researchers incorporate oral history interviews into specific projects; others engage in oral history programs without any deliverables in mind apart from the interviews themselves. Either way, the objective is to record what testimony is available while the opportunity remains.

Should your library begin a community oral history program, implement a detailed plan or program for identifying and recruiting participants, handling the necessary paperwork, processing completed interviews and making the interviews available. Larger public libraries typically have special collections departments located within their central facility—these are usually local or regional history collections. Such collections are an ideal place for completed interviews. If your library has no such collections, you might consider partnering with a local archives or perhaps even a nearby university's special collections department. In any case, before you even begin work you should have some sort of repository—somewhere to put your completed interviews—ready to go.

Recruitment and Informed Consent

Recruiting interview participants will be most important. It will also be the most difficult aspect of the program. You may wish to create a preliminary list of people to approach, based on referrals from local researchers, archivists or librarians. Try contacting these potential interviewees using publicly available information only: a phone number or mailing address from the local white pages, a social media account—or perhaps the person has published their personal email address somewhere online. Do not use information stored in your library's patron records, because your library did not collect this information for that purpose. Do not demand this information from the participant's friends or family members either, although they might volunteer it.

In oral history research, ethics, respect and trust go hand in hand. Try contacting the participant first by phone, email or letter. This should give them time to learn about your project, who you are and why they may or may not wish to participate. Do not seek the person at their personal residence or place of employment: this is intrusive and will likely harm whatever trust you might otherwise have developed with them.

Hide nothing from participants, particularly the interview's intended focus, what will be required of participants should they agree to an interview, and what you intend to do with the interview once it is complete. In most forms of social research, interviewees are guaranteed anonymity and their interviews are seldom published in full and/or for public consumption. But oral history interviews are different, because privacy risks for participants are much greater. Oral history participants typically identify themselves by full name and often discuss, in addition to specific events, personal memories of family, friends, schools, jobs and more. They also must agree to their interview's publication (along with their name) or at least its inclusion in an open research collection. Informed consent is therefore crucial.

LETTER OF INFORMATION:

The Roots of Community: Segregated Carnegie Libraries of the American South as Community Learning Spaces, 1900-65

In the early twentieth century, philanthropist Andrew Carnegie funded the construction of over 1,689 libraries in the United States. The overwhelming majority of these were public libraries and were built in smaller towns and cities. Often these libraries were known in their communities as "Carnegie libraries." And while many of these libraries have been closed or demolished over the past several decades, many still serve as public libraries for their communities.

A lesser known fact about the Carnegie library program is that it funded the construction of several libraries for African Americans across the American south. These segregated Carnegie libraries opened in Atlanta and Savannah, GA; Evansville, IA; Greensboro, NC; Houston, TX, Knoxville and Nashville, TN; Louisville, KY; Meridian and Mound Bayou, MS; and New Orleans, LA. All of them were desegregated in the 1960s or 1970s.

The Project

The project's overall mission is to document the history of these segregated public libraries, most particularly the impacts these libraries had on the larger African-American communities that used them in the years before Civil Rights. A great deal of research for the project is being completed using archival research methods. However, the project is also collecting *oral history interviews* from former users and librarians of these libraries.

I, the Project Manager, am an Assistant Professor at the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Southern Mississippi. I study library history and libraries as community places. This project was awarded a three-year, Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian research grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in Washington, DC.

Oral History Interview Participants

The project is actively seeking participants for oral history interviews. The chief purpose of oral history interviews is to allow people who participated in (or have a direct relationship with) significant historical events a chance to record their stories and recollections for the purposes of education and research.

As is common, oral history interview participants identify themselves by their full name and are asked a series of questions about their recollections. All interviews collected for the project are made available to the general public in a variety of ways. Participants may refuse to answer any questions during the interview and are free to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Participants will also be given a chance to review the interview before it is made available to the public. Participants will receive a small gift (e.g., a gift card) as a thank-you for their participation (see the accompanying *Interview Agreement Form* for more information).

If you have any questions about this project, or about participating in an oral history interview, do not hesitate to contact me using the information below.

Kind regards,

Dr. Matthew Griffis, Assistant Professor
School of Library and Information Science, The University of Southern Mississippi
Phone: 601-266-4228
Email: matthew.griffis@usm.edu

The "Letter of Information" given to interview participants in the Roots of Community project.

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT FORM:

The Roots of Community: Segregated Carnegie Libraries of the American South as Community Learning Spaces, 1900-65

The mission of the "Roots of Community" project is to document the history of segregated public libraries in the American south as community learning spaces, from their origins in the early twentieth century to their last years before integration in the 1960s. A major component of this effort is the collection of oral history interviews with these libraries' former users and librarians.

Thank you for participating in this project. Please read and sign this gift agreement so your interview will be available for future use. Please also read over the accompanying *Letter of Information* if you have not already. Feel free to ask any questions you may have regarding terms and conditions before returning this form to the Project Manager.

AGREEMENT

I, _____, interviewee, donate and convey my oral history interview dated _____ to the "Roots of Community" project and its designated repository at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

In making this gift I understand that I am conveying all right, title, and interest in copyright to the oral history project/repository. I also grant the oral history project and its repository the right to:

- identify me by my full, legal name in the final audio recording and interview transcript as well as and any written materials published as a result of the project; and
- make the final interview available to the general public, for outreach and educational purposes

In return, the "Roots of Community" project grants me a non-exclusive license to use my interview through my lifetime.

I further understand that I will have the opportunity to review and approve my interview transcript before it is made available to the public. Once I have approved it, the "Roots of Community" project will make my interview available for research without restriction. Future uses may include quotation in in printed materials or audio/video excerpts in any media, and availability on the internet.

INTERVIEWEE	**INTERVIEWER**
Name (print): _____	Name (print): _____
Signature (by hand, or electronic):	Signature (by hand, or electronic):
_____	_____
Date: _____	Date: _____

The "Letter of Agreement" used for the Roots of Community project. Like the "Letter of Information," this form was based on examples published in countless handbooks about oral history methods.

Before participants agree to an interview, you must inform them of the following (at a minimum):

- ✓ who you are and what your project is about;
- ✓ on what specific historical events the interview will focus;
- ✓ what their rights are as the participant (e.g., right to withdraw, right to inspect the transcript, etc.)
- ✓ how long (approximately) the interview will take;
- ✓ when, where and how the interview will be recorded and made available to the public; and
- ✓ that their name and biographical information will be published as part of the interview

Informed consent is an essential ethical practice to follow even if you are not a professional academic. The Oral History Association offers a more complete list of information to share with participants. You should consult these guidelines and those of similar resources listed later in this chapter.

Documenting informed consent is just as crucial as obtaining it. To recruit participants for the Roots of Community project, I (the project's director) composed a brief but detailed "Letter of Information" (see p. 38) that covered all points in the above checklist. I mailed this letter to all potential participants, even if we had already discussed the same information over the phone or in an email. After sending the "Letter," I usually waited about 2-3 weeks for a response. This gave participants ample time to ask me questions about the project. If I received no response, I would follow up with another phone call, email or letter; if still no response, then I did not try contacting the participant again. This was, of course, good ethical practice; I also knew that, as the project's director, I represented at least two major organizations (my university as well as my grantor) and thus could not persist unreasonably in my quest for participants.

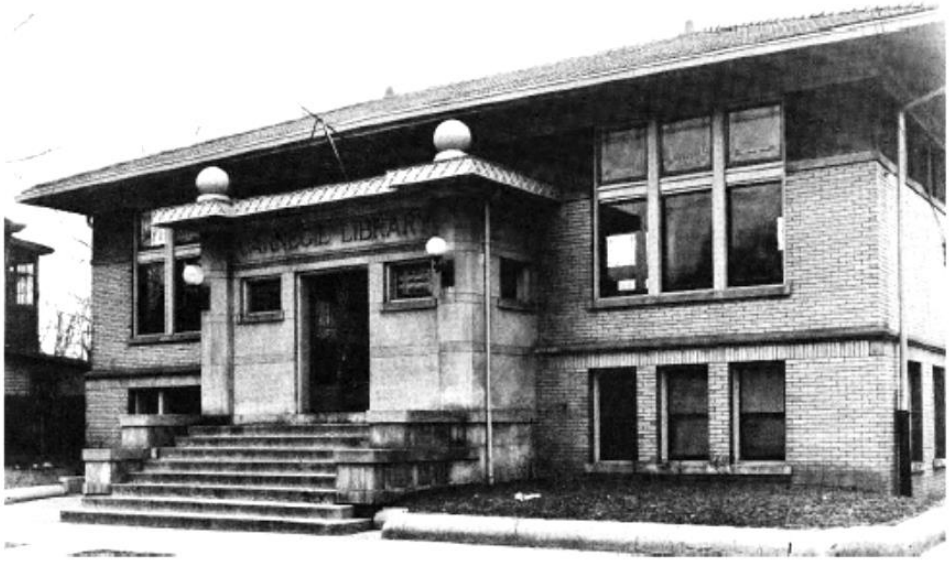
I also composed a one-page "Letter of Agreement" (see p. 39), which included space for the participant's signature as well as my own. Once a participant consented to an interview, I asked them to complete this form and return it to me. I then countersigned it and sent the participant a photocopy for their records (and retained the original copy for my records). We then chose a day, time and place for the interview. Technically, the "Letter of Agreement" was a legal release form: it documented the participant's free choice to give the interview plus their understanding of what the interview required and what would become of the interview once it was finished.

Trust is an important part of recruitment, and can take a while to build—months, sometimes—before a participant agrees to an interview. Remember that not everyone will necessarily share enthusiasm for your project or understand or appreciate the long-term research benefits of capturing historical testimony. Be prepared to hear "no" more often than "yes" and do not demand explanations from people when they decline. Respect their decision and thank them for considering the opportunity.

A potential interviewee may decline for a variety of reasons, not least among them privacy. They may also have difficult feelings about the events in question and thus might consider a researcher's interest intrusive. Broader "insider-outsider" dynamics are not uncommon in oral history research either, especially if researchers come from a different generation and/or cultural background than participants.

Keep your recruitment goals realistic. For example, when I began seeking participants for the Roots of Community project, my success recruiting qualitative interview participants in earlier projects had given me a lot of confidence. I had initially hoped to recruit about 4-5 participants for each of the twelve libraries included in the project. But by the end of the project's first year, my expectations needed

Do you remember the CHERRY STREET LIBRARY?



If **yes**, you can help **record the history** of this important library.

The Cherry Street Branch library opened in November 1914 and served Evansville's African American community for over 40 years. The library closed in 1955. I am attempting to locate people who visited the Cherry Street Branch library during the 1950s or earlier and preserve their memories for future generations.

If you can help in any way, please contact me at ***601-266-4228*** *or* ***matthew.griffis@usm.edu****. Your help is much appreciated.*

Sincerely,

Dr. Matthew Griffis

Assistant Professor of Library and Information Science
The University of Southern Mississippi
118 College Drive, #5146, Hattiesburg, MS 39402

This project is made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, grant #RE-31-16-0044-16.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

20 Years
Institute of Museum and Library Services

In the second year of the project, I began circulating printed recruitment fliers in several communities. I also maintained a project website that included a contact form for people interested in giving an interview.

readjustment. Archival research revealed that several libraries had closed so long ago that few, if any, former library users or librarians were probably still available to interview. I nevertheless obtained strong leads in nearly all the communities I visited; I printed fliers and (with permission) posted these in local libraries and on other public announcement boards. I also asked community groups to circulate information about my project. In some communities, I was able to identify and contact about four or five participants; yet only two or three would agree to an interview. Some people would agree but fall out of touch after my initial contact. In one community, I identified seven possible participants and managed to contact about five; but still not one agreed to an interview. So again, keep your recruitment goals realistic.

The following examples of **oral history collections** relate to African American history and, in at least one case, the history of library services for African Americans. Although this author completed several new oral history interviews for his Roots of Community project, he also sought pre-existing interviews in repositories across the United States. For researchers of local library history, pre-existing oral histories that explore library-related themes will be difficult if not impossible to locate (because they probably do not exist). If possible, seek oral histories that explore the general community's history; these may contain bits of relevant information, for example recollections of other community spaces, groups and people.

Civil Rights Greensboro Oral History Interviews, University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Archives and Special Collections. This collection offers many oral histories, several of which refer to Greensboro's former Carnegie Negro Library; other interviews contain information about life in the city before integration. See interviews with Vance H. Chavis, Lewis Dowdy and Sheila Cunningham Sims.

Georgia Government Documentation Project Oral Histories, Georgia State University Library. This collection contains an oral history from 1992 with Annie L. McPheeters, librarian of Atlanta's former Auburn Branch. The repository offers both audio and a transcript.

Houston Oral History Project, Houston Public Library Digital Archives. This collection contains three interviews with Thelma Scott Bryant, a native of Houston's Fourth Ward who also used the city's former Colored Carnegie Library. A Flash-based player allows researchers to play audio recordings while scrolling through interview transcripts.

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Once a participant consents to an interview, choose a day and time most convenient for them. If you can conduct the interview in person, let the participant choose a location that makes them feel comfortable. Quiet and reasonably private locations are best; avoid locations near crowds or busy streets, because extraneous noises may obscure a participant's voice on the final recording. If a participant is local but does

not wish to be interviewed at home, you might suggest using your office or perhaps a quiet meeting room at your library. If you interview the participant in person, whether you leave any doors open or shut is up to you and the participant; but if an interview room has only one door, position the participant so that they are nearest to the door. If the interviewer sits nearest to the door, that could intimidate the participant.

Recording the Interview

While a participant's comfort level is important, interviews are useless if you do not at least audio-record them. Do not force this on participants, however; if someone shows interest in being interviewed but reluctance to it being audio-recorded, explain that recording will not only allow future researchers to use the interview for their projects; it also helps ensure the accuracy of the final transcript. However, if the prospective interviewee decisively objects to the recording, do not express anger or frustration. But you should probably pass on doing the interview.

Invest in reliable equipment and use a digital audio recorder, not an old-fashioned tape machine. Despite ongoing debates about analog recordings sounding "truer" or "more natural" than others, digital recording is better by far for research interviews, especially if you plan to make the recordings publicly available. Most digital recording devices are more portable than analog ones and create recordings far superior to the hissy, magnetic tapes of yesteryear. To record the Roots of Community interviews, I used two devices: a Sony ICD-PX333 and a Tascam DR-05. Both can record in high-resolution, compressionless formats (like .WAV); both can transfer raw audio files to a computer via a USB connection or removable microSD card; and both recorders allow external devices like microphones or telephone recording cables to attach directly via dedicated ports. But of the two devices, only the Tascam DR-05 could record in stereo (2 channels), which sounds better to most human ears than mono (1 channel). Alternatively, you could use a laptop computer or tablet to record your interviews, using the device's built-in condenser mic and a desktop application that captures live audio. The Oral History Association offers more information about technology standards for oral history recordings.

If you conduct an interview by phone, use a landline if possible and be extra certain than the participant has consented to the recording of the interview. Patch your phone directly to your audio recorder using a cable or adaptor designed specifically for this purpose. Do not record telephone interviews via speakerphone with the recorder placed next to the phone's speaker: this rarely, if ever, produces a quality recording. Also try recording the interview to two separate devices at once: that way, if one malfunctions the other can serve as backup. And if your recording device(s) are battery operated (and most portable ones are), be certain to use new batteries for each interview and always use batteries made by reliable manufacturers.

Interview Questions and Incentives

Place a time limit on interviews (none of my Roots of Community interviews lasted longer than an hour). Questions should follow a semi-structured format: that is, begin with a prepared list of basic questions but ask more specific questions in response to the participant's answers. I usually began with broad questions about the participant's background and younger life, since I knew that (in most cases) they had used a segregated library when they were very young. My questions later progressed to their memories of the library, beginning with their earliest experiences. I also asked participants about their memories of library collections, the library's building(s), librarians and staff, other users, and the library's surrounding neighborhood. This way, I began each interview knowing that my prepared questions covered the ground I needed for my research. Anything else the participants discussed was considered a bonus.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS:

The Roots of Community: Segregated Carnegie Libraries of the American South as Community Learning Spaces, 1900-65

Interviews will follow a semi-structured format using the questions below as prompts in every interview. These questions are basic prompts only. The interviewer will follow up on interviewee responses with more specific questions that will allow the interviewer and interviewee to explore subjects further.

Each interview will begin with a "lead" that focuses both the interviewer and the interviewee on the goals of the interview: "This is Dr. Matthew Griffis of the University of Southern Mississippi interviewing [name of narrator] on [date] at [location, or over the phone] about their recollections using the [name of library] in the community of [name of town or community]."

The interviewer will then obtain an oral statement of consent from the interviewee by asking them the following "yes/no" question: "You have read over the *Letter of Information* and the *Oral History Interview Donor Form* and agree to participate?" The interviewer will then remind them of their rights to refuse to answer any question asked of them and/or withdraw from the interview at any time.

The interview will then proceed:

SCHEUDLE 1: QUESTIONS FOR FORMER USERS

1. How long did you live, or have you lived, in [name of community]?
2. What do you remember about [name of community] at that time, as a place to live?
3. Around what age did you begin using the library?
4. How close did you live to the library?
5. What can you recall about the librarians? Can you remember any of their names?
6. What can you recall about the library's books and collections? What were your favorite books to read?
7. What can you recall about the library's services?
8. Did you attend any of the library's programs?
9. What can you recall about the other library users?
10. Did you ever use—or attempt to use—other libraries in [name of community]?
11. Is there any one particularly memorable incident you experienced visiting at the library that stands out?
12. What other places in town would you say were community meeting places for African-Americans?
13. When did you stop using the library? What do you remember about that?

SCHEDULE 2: QUESTIONS FOR FORMER LIBRARY WORKERS

1. How long did you live, or have you lived, in [name of community]?
2. What do you remember about [name of community] at that time, as a place to live and work?
3. Around when did you begin working at the library?
4. How close did you live to the library?
5. What can you recall about other librarians and staff? Can you remember any of their names?
6. What can you recall about the library's books and collections?
7. What can you recall about the library's services?
8. What can you recall about the library's programs?
9. What can you recall about the other library users?
10. Did you ever work at any other libraries in [name of community]?
11. Is there any one particularly memorable incident you experienced working at the library that stands out?
12. What other places in town would you say were community meeting places for African-Americans?
13. When did you stop working at the library? What do you recall about that?

Guidelines and basic questions I prepared for the Roots of Community interviews. These gave each interview a general uniformity and ensured that I did not forget questions crucial to my project's objectives. I prepared two sets of basic questions, one for former users and the other for former librarians and staff. (Unfortunately, although I managed to identify and contact a few former librarians or staff members, none completed an interview.)

I also offered what some researchers call a "participant incentive." That is, I thanked each participant for their interview with a $25 gift card redeemable at a local bookstore. Not all researchers approve of this practice; some believe interviewees should participate for the sake of advancing research, not for gifts. Fortunately, I was permitted to offer gift cards. In my opinion, $25 was not enough to "sway" participants towards giving an interview but seemed big enough to thank them for their time and support of my project. Whether you offer such gifts is up to you and/or your library's policies.

The Oral History Association offers many guidelines on the ethics of oral history interviewing as well as best practices beyond those considered here. You should consult resources like these (as well as many of the handbooks listed later in this section) before you conduct any oral history interviews.

PROCESSING INTERVIEWS

In the early days of oral history projects, it was not uncommon for researchers to submit raw tapes to a repository but do nothing more—at least not right away. Sometimes years would pass before a volunteer or staff member would transcribe (or even make backup copies of) an interview's original recording. Fortunately, many oral history programs now process interviews reasonably soon after their completion. This is important because you do not want a backlog of unprocessed work to form (and possibly discourage you from doing more interviews); moreover, participants may expect to receive drafts of their interviews reasonably soon after their completion.

But before you do anything else, backup your raw interview recording(s) either to a USB key, an external hard drive or storage cloud. If the interview was recorded on analog (magnetic) tape, then make backup copies digitally. In any case, there should be at least two (if not more) high-quality copies of the raw audio recording, and ideally these copies will be dispersed across multiple locations.

Transcription

Next, transcribe the interview. This will require replaying a recorded interview in fragments and typing it, bit by bit, with a word processor. Replay the recording just one or two sentences at a time and, every few minutes or so, replay whole paragraphs or sections to double-check the accuracy of your work. Make sure that punctuation as well as sentence and paragraph structure reflect not only what the participant said but also how they said it. You can use *italics* in the transcript for any words the participant may have stressed in the original interview. Also, if the participant laughed or gave a noticeable pause while speaking, the transcript can show this with brackets: [pause]. You may also use brackets to insert small, additional pieces of information for clarification, if necessary. For example:

Griffis:	Was there a library at the school you attended?
WH:	I don't remember… I don't remember there being a library here [at the Gregory School]. I don't remember ever seeing or even knowing what a library was.
Griffis:	So that [visiting the Carnegie library] was your very first library experience?
WH:	I think it was.
Griffis:	So, you attended the Gregory School for elementary [school]…
WH:	I did. I graduated from here. Mm-hmm.

Even when the interview recording itself seems clear and sharp, a participant's manner of speaking can sometimes make transcription difficult. Replay the unclear speech several more times, if necessary; perhaps ask a trusted colleague for their opinion. In any case, do not guess at what the participant might have said. Just insert [inaudible] into the transcript, where appropriate.

Transcription is tedious work but do not rush it. Budget at least one hour for every finished page of transcript. Always replay the raw audio yourself and refine the transcript's use of punctuation and spacing to reflect the interview's content and pace. And if any assistants transcribe the interviews for you, be very, very sure to double-check their work.

Title interviews simply: "Oral History with Myrtle Ross" for example, or "Interview with Jerome Wilson" in large type (e.g., 20 pts) at the top of the transcript's first page. Immediately below this, provide the interview's recording date(s), the interviewer's name and professional contact information, some basic information about the project plus any conditions on the interview's reuse. Leave a solid line. Next, just before the interview transcription, compose a brief (e.g., 200-350 words) biographical note about the participant. Keep this as descriptive as possible. Open it with 1-2 sentences about the participant's relevance to your research subject; follow this with key biographical information presented chronologically, for instance details about places the participant has lived, schools they attended, jobs they have held and, if also relevant, basic details about their parents, siblings and extended family members. Depending on your questions, the participant may reveal much of this information in the interview. Some researchers collect this information via written questionnaire, either immediately before or after an interview. (When I interviewed participants for the Roots of Community project, whatever biographical information they did not reveal during an interview I simply asked of them afterward, with the audio recorder still running.) In any case, the biographical note should provide just enough context so that other researchers can understand the general shape of the participant's life.

There are several ways to format an interview transcript. You might inspect published interviews with well-known writers, artists or political figures and choose a format that best suits your project. But whatever formatting you use, use it consistently, and not just for one but for all transcripts of the same project. If your project has a logo, or if your library (and/or partner repository) asks or requires you to use theirs, place this graphic at the very top of the transcript's first page, immediately above the interview's title. If a grantor supported your work and requires explicit acknowledgment, such credits are best placed at the very end of the transcript.

Participant Review

It is not bad practice for participants to review their interview's transcript. In fact, this can help catch mistakes or clarify any ambiguities in the transcript draft. Participants will also appreciate knowing, even before they consent to an interview, that they will have the opportunity to review their interview's transcript and request corrections.

So, if you choose to let participants review their interview's transcript, email it to them if possible. If not, mail it and be sure to include return postage. Also include a cover letter that explains when you intend to publish the interview (or portions thereof) and that you welcome any queries or requests for corrections in the meantime. Give participants at least several weeks to review the full transcript and respond (if they choose to respond). When completing the Roots of Community project, I normally gave participants about three months' time to request any changes. (Fortunately, my transcription was accurate enough that only one participant requested corrections.)

THE ROOTS OF COMMUNITY PROJECT
Carnegie Libraries for African Americans 1908-1924

Oral History with Myrtle Ross

July 16, 2018

Biography

Myrtle Jackson Ross was born in 1929 in Austin County, Texas, where her father worked as a cotton-picker. When she was about eight years-old, Ross's family moved to Houston, settling on Mason Street in the city's Fourth Ward. There, her father worked at a hospital and her mother worked as a homemaker. Ross graduated from the Gregory School on Victor Street before attending Booker T. Washington High School on West Dallas Street.

Ross was in high school when she began visiting Houston's Colored Carnegie Library, which was situated directly behind Booker T. Washington High School. For Ross, the library served primarily as a source of recreational reading materials; and though she did not participate in any library clubs or programs, Ross was one of several Washington school students selected by the librarian, Ms. Florence Bandy, to help process books in the Carnegie library's basement.

After graduating from high school in 1947, Ross attended Texas Southern University, Johnson's Business School and Erma Hughes Business School. She worked for the federal census and later in a grocery store. She also married and raised a family.

Ross, who has resided in Houston since childhood, remembers growing up in the era of segregation (ca. 1940s) and recalls several other Houston landmarks, including the Rainbow and Lincoln theatres and the Pilgrim Temple Building (demolished in the 1960s) on the corner of West Dallas and Bagby streets.

Transcript

Griffis: This is Dr. Matthew Griffis of the University of Southern Mississippi interviewing Ms. Myrtle Ross on July 16th, 2018. This is an oral history interview for the *Roots of Community Project*. I'm sitting here in Hattiesburg Mississippi, in my office at the University; and Ms. Ross is in Houston, Texas. And due to the distance, we are of course conducting this interview over the telephone.

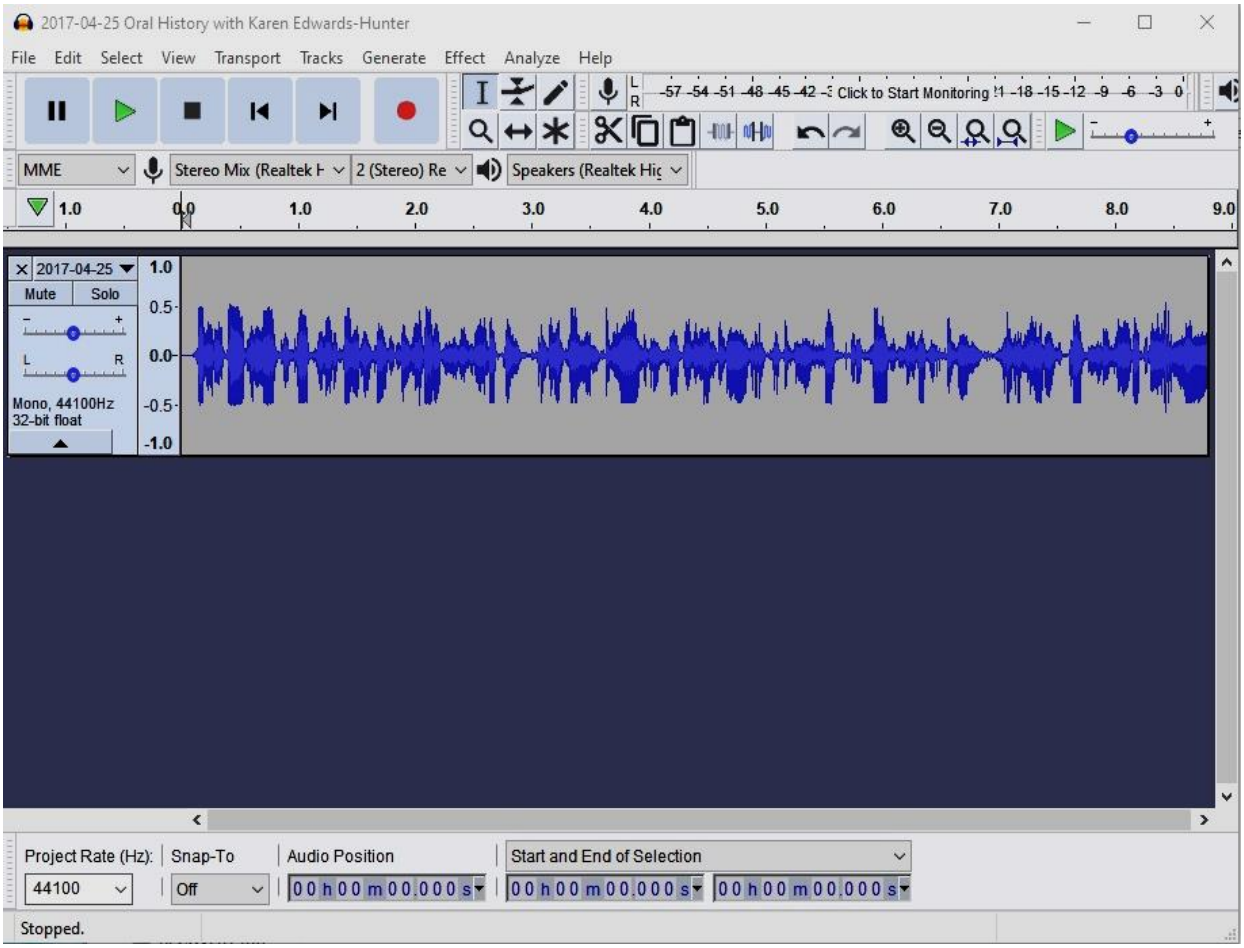
The first page of an oral history interview transcript from the Roots of Community *project. Note the logo at top, the title, date and project information directly below it followed by the biographical note for the participant.*

Processing Audio Files

Many online oral history collections offer transcripts in either html or PDF—sometimes both. Others will also allow visitors to stream an audio copy of the interview, usually via a media player embedded in the webpage. Offering both transcript and audio copies not only helps humanize an oral history participant; it also helps listeners better understand and interpret the interview. They can even judge the accuracy of the transcript: responses that sounded one way during transcription may sound different to another set of ears. This can help you decipher inaudible portions of otherwise completed transcripts: other researchers who consult the transcript might contact you and suggest clarifications.

Choose your streaming audio formats wisely. Although .WAV files offer the highest quality, they are often too large for online streaming. Record the original, raw audio file in .WAV but save a separate "access" or "streaming copy" of the interview in a smaller, more compressed format like .mp3.

Although you will want to present the audio copy of the interview as accurately as possible, it is not bad practice to remove any extraneous portions of the recording just before or just after the interview itself. Perhaps you will need to add an audio tag at the end of each interview to recognize a grantor or other partner organization. Several free, open source audio editing applications exist that can help you with everything from interview transcription to preparing access copies for audio streaming. One example is Audacity, an open source, cross-platform program that many beginners find easy to learn and work with.



The above shows one of the Roots of Community's interviews files in Audacity. I recorded most interviews in .WAV/stereo but posted access copies in .mp3/mono to keep file size manageable.

There is no shortage of available handbooks and manuals for the **planning and management of community oral history programs**—many of which include valuable information about the legal and logistical aspects. The list below appears in two parts: essential sources for public libraries conducting community oral history programs, and sources that a library might also consider if time and funds permit.

Essential sources:

- Bergen, Teresa. *Transcribing Oral History*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
- MacKay, Nancy, Mary Kay Quinlan and Barbara W. Sommer. *Community Oral History Toolkit, Volume 5: After the Interview in Community Oral History*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013.
- MacKay, Nancy. *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive*, 2nd edition. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2016.
- Mercier, Laurie and Madeline Buckendorf. *Using Oral History in Community History Projects*. Carlisle, PA: Oral History Association, 2010.
- Nelson, Cyns. *Oral History in Your Library: Create Shelf Space for Community Voice*. Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2018.
- Neuenschwander, John A. *A Guide to Oral History and the Law*, 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Sommer, Barbara W. and Mary Kay Quinlan. *The Oral History Manual*, 3rd edition. New York: Alta Mira Press, 2018.
- Sommer, Barbara W., Nancy MacKay and Mary Kay Quinlan. *Community Oral History Toolkit, Volume 2: Planning a Community Oral History Project*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013.
- Sommer, Barbara W., Nancy MacKay and Mary Kay Quinlan. *Community Oral History Toolkit, Volume 3: Managing a Community Oral History Project*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013.
- Quinlan, Mary Kay, Nancy MacKay and Barbara W. Sommer. *Community Oral History Toolkit, Volume 1: Introduction to Community Oral History*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013.
- Quinlan, Mary Kay, Nancy MacKay and Barbara W. Sommer. *Community Oral History Toolkit, Volume 4: Interviewing in Community Oral History*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013.

Additional consultation, if possible:

- Baum, Willa K. *Oral History for the Local Historical Society*, 3rd edition. New York: Alta Mira Press, 1995.
- Boyd, Douglas A. and Mary A. Larson, eds. *Oral History and Digital Humanities: Voice, Access and Engagement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Charlton, Thomas L., Lois E. Myers and Rebecca Sharpless, eds. *Handbook of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*. New York: Alta Mira Press, 2007.
- DeBlasio, Donna Marie. *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 2009.
- Grobel, Lawrence. *The Art of the Interview: Lessons from a Master of the Craft*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004.
- Hart, Cynthia and Lisa Samson. *The Oral History Workshop: Collect and Celebrate the Life Stories of Your Family and Friends*. New York: Workman, 2009.
- Marquis, Kathy and Leslie Waggener. *Local History Reference Collections for Public Libraries*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2015.
- Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd edition. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

PART 3

SHARING

Preparing Content, Publications, Events and Programs and *Online Engagement*

3.1. PREPARING CONTENT

As you finish your research and begin preparing deliverables, consider the following general principles when presenting historical research to an audience.

CORROBORATING EVIDENCE

Whenever possible, verify the accuracy of your claims by using more than one primary source of evidence. To give a simple (but nonetheless common) example, you might obtain the date of a library's opening from a contemporary annual report. Double- or even triple-check that date, if you can, against other sources: perhaps a contemporary newspaper clipping, or even a library board's original, handwritten meeting minutes. This way, you can feel reasonably confident that the date you report is accurate. Corroborating evidence this way, however, will not always be possible. Quotations from unpublished letters or journals, for example, cannot be corroborated, since records like these are often unique not just in form but also in content. Depending on context, that their authors ever expressed the same or similar opinions elsewhere is unlikely.

REPORTING THE PAST

Ideally, researchers will wait until they finish collecting evidence before they formulate arguments or draw conclusions about their subject. Yet many researchers—including those of history—cannot help but begin analysis as they dig for further clues. Their "preliminary analysis"—that is, their working theories or arguments about their subject—are often what motivate them to dig even further. In fact, researchers from many different fields would probably argue that that preliminary analysis is essential.

Whatever the case, be careful not to deliberately ignore, avoid or even suppress any reasonable evidence you encounter that does not fit your working arguments or theories—or, more specifically, directly refutes or disproves any of your claims. Responsible interpretation of the past acknowledges genuine counterclaims, no matter how inconvenient they may seem. In fact, your willingness and ability to handle opposing evidence responsibly will affect your audience's perception of your overall credibility. At the same time, avoid establishing false balance. This is when a researcher—perhaps one desperate to involve an opposing viewpoint in their analysis—considers a counterclaim that most if not all other researchers have already dismissed as weak or without merit. Imagine, for example, a historian writing a treatise about the Holocaust that also acknowledges counterclaims published by known Holocaust deniers. It is not necessarily false balance to acknowledge that Holocaust denial exists; but it is quite another thing to give such counterclaims equal respect or credence in an analysis of the subject.

Another common pitfall is to report too much. I and others call this "garbage disposal reporting," and it is careless—well, perhaps not entirely careless, but it produces dull and sometimes even confusing work. Specifically, "garbage disposal reporting" is when a writer crams (like waste into a garbage bin) nearly everything they discovered about their subject. Sometimes the researcher does this simply to gain "credit" for discovering minor information not yet documented elsewhere. But more often, this happens because the researcher does not have a firm enough sense of their own arguments (or at least a clear sense of how to explicate them). Another way to describe this habit is the "hit and miss" maneuver: Imagine an archer with no clear view of their target who shoots all their arrows in the target's general direction. The archer only

hopes that one of their arrows will hit it. It is an exercise in desperation. Likewise, a writer with no clear sense of their arguments may overreport in the hopes that readers will figure out what the "bullseye" was. Avoid this, because it never works. "Less is more" is often good practice when reporting history. Do not overwhelm your audience with superfluous or irrelevant information. Give proper context but remain focused on the most relevant (and thus convincing) information.

WORKING WITH EXTERNAL CONTENT

Researchers often enhance their deliverables with external content. "External content," in this case, means the intellectual and/or physical property of other people or organizations: writings (published and unpublished), images (including artwork), audio and/or video recordings, and so forth. But since I am not a lawyer, I will not even attempt to explain the intricate (and often context-specific) rules that govern the reuse of others' property in research. The resources listed below will likely help you with that.

Even in professional librarianship, misinformation or misunderstanding about "fair use" and/or what "for academic purposes" really means is not uncommon. When in doubt, always ask permission; and if necessary, talk to a qualified lawyer. Because if there is any chance the material you want to reuse is protected, it probably is (or it would at least be good practice to assume so, until you learn otherwise). And if the material is indeed protected, then reproducing it in your work will almost certainly require permission from whoever has the right to grant you permission. Obtaining permission from more than one party may be necessary. Either way, always obtain this permission in writing and, unless the rights holder asks you *not* to, explicitly acknowledge this permission in your finished work.

In addition to those already listed in Part 1.1, the following resources can help you navigate the intricacies of **reporting history**, from constructing arguments to knowing when (and what) to cite, citing sources properly and structuring your final product:

- Cronon, William. "Learning Historical Research." Madison, WI: williamcronon.net, 2009.
- Storey, William Kelleher. *Writing History: A Guide for Students*, 5th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

The following resources may help you better understand and/or navigate the process of legally **reusing the intellectual and/or physical property of others** in your project's deliverables:

- Crews, Kenneth D. *Copyright Law for Librarians and Educators: Creative Strategies and Practical Solutions*, 3rd edition. Chicago: American Library Association, 2012.
- Harris, Lesley Ellen. *Licensing Digital Content: A Practical Guide for Librarians*, 3rd edition. Chicago: American Library Association, 2018.
- Lipinski, Tomas A. *The Librarian's Legal Companion for Licensing Information Resources and Services*. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2012.
- United States Copyright Office. "Circular 1: Copyright Basics." Washington, DC: United States Copyright Office, 2019.
- United States Copyright Office. "Circular 16A: How to Obtain Permission." Washington, DC: United States Copyright Office, 2017.

3.2. PUBLICATIONS

Formal publications are the most traditional form of research dissemination. And while non-traditional forms are often more popular for public historians, you might consider the following when sharing information about your library's past.

BOOKS

In academic terms, books are the most common form of *monograph*, which is a non-serialized publication of variable length. Depending on the publisher, books run a minimum of 30,000 to 40,000 words although some books are slightly shorter. This toolkit will not cover book publishing in detail, however; for while "the book" remains the most traditional form of publication for academic historians, it offers little to librarians or other researchers wanting to share the story of a single public library.

While books about large public libraries (like Seattle's or New York's) are easy to find, those about the **libraries of smaller cities and towns** are not. The following may provide ideas for the kind of book your library wishes to publish (most were published either by a library or local museum):

- Bentley, Tom. *A History of the Hanover Public Library to 1950*. Hanover, ON: Hanover Public Library, 1986.
- Boyer, J. Patrick. *Local Library, Global Passport: The Evolution of a Carnegie Library*. Toronto: Blue Butterfly Books, 2008.
- Braby, Ellen and Jane Hunt. *The Santa Monica Public Library, 1890-1990*. Spokane, WA: Clarke Co., 1990.
- Broach, Jeanne. *The Meridian Public Libraries: An Informal History, 1913-1974*. Meridian, MS: Meridian Public Library, 1974.
- Dufferin County Museum and Archives. *A History of the Orangeville Public Library*. Rosemont, ON: DCMA, 2009.
- Hazel, Michael V. *The Dallas Public Library: Celebrating a Century of Service, 1901-2001.* Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2001.
- Robinson, Dean. *Overdue: Stratford Library Services, 1846-2003*. Stratford, ON: Stratford Public Library, 2003.
- Snow, Helen. *The Greensboro Public Library: The First 100 Years*. Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Company, 2003.

Checks and Evaluations

Conventional academic publishing requires at least two kinds of checks or evaluations before your book reaches publication. The first is your manuscript's references, usually done in the form of footnotes (or endnotes) and a bibliography. Have you cited your work's sources of information adequately? Any claim or fact that is not common knowledge (or any opinion or interpretation that is not your own) requires citation. Have you used an acknowledged referencing style? Although some researchers prefer others, the *Chicago Manual of Style*'s footnote/endnote method is what historians use most frequently, and luckily

resources like Purdue University's Online Writing Lab offers valuable assistance with using this and other referencing styles. The other "check" manuscripts undergo is prepublication review, where the publisher recruits two experts in the same field to anonymously assess the manuscript's merit (for more about this, see the subsection about academic articles).

Choosing a Publisher

You can publish your book one of several ways. You might seek a conventional academic publisher (these are usually university presses) or you might instead seek a trade (non-academic) publisher that specializes in non-fiction for general interest audiences. Just remember that not all publishers publish the same thing: seek one that has already published books like yours. For a book about a small public library's history, a local or regional publisher might be the best option. Such publishers sometimes take special interest in books about regional history and culture.

Depending on how you publish your book, it may not be possible for your manuscript to complete the second of both checks and evaluations. If so, you might ask a professional academic familiar with local and/or library history to evaluate your manuscript's content before you publish it. Some opinion is better than no opinion.

There is a third option. Many academic and cultural institutions (universities, libraries, archives and museums, for example) have served as disseminators of their own work. Sometimes these publications serve fundraising purposes; more often they are products of special funding, the conditions of which obligate creators to make publications freely available to the public. Whatever the reason, with the advent of open access publishing, plus the increased availability of professional-quality design programs like Adobe InDesign and QuarkXPress, more academic and cultural institutions now disseminate original works, especially those intended for free, online distribution. Should you choose this option, ensure that your publications undergo some level of professional editing and design, even if this means involving people external to your library. Badly written, sloppy-looking work will reflect poorly on its creator.

The following resources may assist with the **preparation of serious nonfiction books**, from the planning, writing and editing to layout and design:

- Ellis, Barbara G. *The Copy-Editing and Headline Handbook*. New York: Perseus Books, 2001.
- Larsen, Michael. *How to Write a Book Proposal*, 4th edition. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 2011.
- Lupton, Ellen and Jennifer Cole Phillips. *Graphic Design: The New Basics*, 2nd edition. Hudson, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2015.
- Rabiner, Susan and Alfred Fortunato. *Thinking Like Your Editor: Hot to Write Great Serious Nonfiction and Get It Published*. New York: Norton, 2002.
- Sword, Helen. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Tondreau, Beth. *Layout Essentials: 100 Design Principles for Using Grids*, revised edition. Rockport, MA: Rockport Publishers, 2019.
- Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2016.

ACADEMIC ARTICLES

Depending on its potential appeal to academics, you might consider publishing your research in an academic (or "scholarly") journal. Articles in academic journals differ considerably from those published in newspapers and magazines: for one, their primary function is to report research, not necessarily to entertain or engage with readers; they typically run from 4,000 to 7,000 words (in the humanities and social sciences, anyway); and they fully document their sources of information through in-text references and a bibliography. Your article's length and structure will depend on your choice of journal. Journals often list these and other criteria on their website (or their publisher's).

Plenty of handbooks explain general approaches to writing historical research, and many of these guides appear in various lists in Part 1 of this toolkit. But if you seek guidance on writing an academic article specifically, consider a guide designed for college students, for example Rutgers Department of History's Guide for Undergraduates. Generally, your article's opening should include a thesis statement: this is your article's central argument, the position you support by telling the "story" that was the focus of your research. Your article should also discuss previously published work about the same or related subjects: this will situate your research within the wider literature and identify its unique contributions. You should also explain your research's implications or scholarly importance. That is, your article should provide readers with some idea of why its contents are important, if not to society then at least to scholarship. This is usually done in the article's conclusions and is sometimes called the "So what?" or "Who cares?" test.

Before choosing a journal, first consider your article's major areas of focus. It covers public libraries and history, yes; but not all library and information science journals focus on public libraries or their history. Seek journals known for publishing work about the history of libraries, for example: *Information & Culture* (formerly the *Journal of Library History*), which is published by the University of Texas Press; *Libraries: Culture, History and Society*, published by the Pennsylvania State University Press; *The Library Quarterly*, published by the University of Chicago Press; and *Progressive Librarian*, which is published by the Progressive Librarian's Guild. If your article concerns the history of libraries and racial segregation specifically, you might also consider submitting it to an appropriate non-LIS journal, like the *Journal of African American History* or *Africology: The Journal of Pan-African Studies*.

Traditional vs. Open Access Journals

Public history is about sharing knowledge with the general public. But if you publish in a conventional academic journal, your work will likely not reach the general public, as many academic journals publish exclusively for the academic market. You might instead consider a journal that publishes "open access": this means that virtually anyone with an internet connection will be able to freely access your article. But be warned: while many academic journals use this model, they sometimes require authors to pay a special fee. Fees can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars an article, depending on the journal. If you cannot afford such fees, consider instead a journal published by a professional association located near you: *Mississippi Libraries*, for example, which is an open access journal published by the Mississippi Library Association. Not all professional associations publish journals, and not all professional journals publish open access. But your state or regional library association may publish something like *Mississippi Libraries*. An increasing number of these journals "referee" research articles too: *Mississippi Libraries* does, as does *The Southeastern Librarian*.

The following are examples of **academic articles** that focused on the history of a single public library, library system or librarian:

- Anderson, Sarah A. "The Place to Go: The 135th Street Branch Library and the Harlem Renaissance." *Library Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (2003): 383-421.
- Fenton, Michele T. "Stepping Out in Faith: Lillian Haydon Childress Hall, Pioneer Librarian." *Indiana Libraries* 33, no. 1 (2014): 5-11.
- Fenton, Michele T. "Way Down Yonder at the Cherry Street Branch: A Short History of Evansville's Negro Library." *Indiana Libraries* 30, no. 2 (2011): 37-41.
- Knowlton, Steven A. "The 'Negro Branch' Library in Memphis: A Case Study of Public Services in a Segregated Southern City." *Libraries: Culture, History and Society* 1, no. 1 (2017): 23-45.
- Griffis, Matthew. R. "Living History: The Carnegie Library as Place in Ontario." *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 34, no. 2 (2010): 185-211.
- Griffis, Matthew. R. "A Separate Space: Remembering Meridian's Segregated Carnegie Library, 1913-74." *Mississippi Libraries* 80, no. 3 (2017): 39-49.
- Malone, Cheryl Knott. "Autonomy and Accommodation: Houston's Colored Carnegie Library, 1907-1922." *Libraries and Culture* 34, no. 2 (1999): 95-112.
- Malone, Cheryl Knott. "Louisville Free Public *Library's* Racially Segregated Branches, 1905-35." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 93, no. 2 (1995): 159-79.
- Wilkins, John. "Blue's 'Colored' Branch." *American Libraries* 7 (May 1976): 256-57.

Peer-Review

What is "refereeing"? Before a journal decides to publish your article, the journal's editor(s) will ask other researchers (usually two, with similar expertise as yours) to review it. The editor(s) will not disclose either reviewer's identity or (in most cases) disclose your identity to the reviewers. After reading your article, the reviewers will send the journal's editor(s) a brief report outlining the article's strengths and in what ways it might be improved. They will consider the soundness of its arguments, the quality of its evidence as well as its mechanical and stylistic competence. Ultimately, each reviewer will recommend that the journal either publish the article (usually with some revisions) or reject it. This is called "double-blind" peer-reviewing (or refereeing) and it distinguishes scholarly publishing from most other forms.

Newcomers to scholarly publishing often fear peer-review. True, it is not always a pleasant experience. But if you intend to publish in an academic journal, you cannot avoid it. Think of peer-review as a welcome quality check: If other experts see no major faults in your article, you can feel reasonably assured of its quality. On the other hand, if the journal rejects your article, the editor(s) may invite you to revise and resubmit it for a second review. Either way, the editor(s) should share the reviewers' reports with you and reading them should help you grow both as a researcher and a writer.

Some journals are easier to publish in than others. Sometimes an editor will not send an article out for peer-review if they have any immediate concerns, for example that the article somehow does not match the kind of research the journal normally seeks. As you search for potential journals, check each journal's website (or its publisher's website) for that journal's current acceptance rate, which is usually expressed as a percentage. This number reflects the proportion of articles the journal publishes after articles finish peer-review. A rate of, say, 45 percent means that nearly half of all articles sent out for peer-review reach

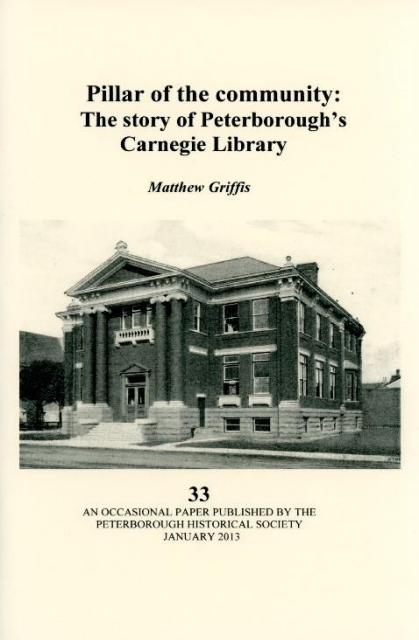
publication. The other 55% get rejected. As a rule, the harder it is to publish in a particular journal, the more "prestigious" the journal: an acceptance rate of about 20% or less usually indicates a high stature. Some LIS journals have acceptance rates this low, but many others have rates closer to about 40-50%. If a journal's website does not list an acceptance rate, you may find it in a resource like *Cabell's International Serials Directory* or you can ask the journal's editor(s) directly.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Occasional papers are non-serialized publications longer than a journal article but shorter than a book. Sometimes they report research; sometimes they contain essays about current events. Examples that report historical research typically run from 6,000 to 12,000 words and, depending on the publisher, some papers must pass peer-review before publication. However, while academic presses still publish them, in the history field many publishers of occasional papers are historical societies. Occasional papers often sell for a small price; out-of-print titles are sometimes freely available online.

Publication Opportunities

The review process for an occasional paper will vary depending on the publisher. One of my first publications was an occasional paper I wrote about my hometown Carnegie library. The local historical society published the paper, which was about 12,000 words and included about five historical images. But before the society even considered my manuscript, they required me first to present in their annual speaker series, a monthly event they ran with the help of the local public library. After delivering my presentation, I was invited to submit a manuscript for the society's occasional paper series. They published just one paper a year. The society's board of reviewers, which included several local college professors, accepted my manuscript with only minor revisions and, in less than a year, published the paper.



Cover of paper #33 from the PHS Occasional Papers series.

Check whether your local or state historical society publishes occasional papers. Although they are less ideal for reporting public history research, an occasional paper might be more publicly accessible than a journal article and would probably be easier to accomplish than writing a book.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

You may wish to publish an article about your library's history in a local newspaper. It will reach a wide and diverse audience, particularly readers who normally might not show interest in local history or even pay attention to your library's programs or events. Disadvantages include spending time and work on something that will run for only a single day (that is, if the newspaper does not also publish online).

Though editorial policies differ by paper, many local newspapers will publish outside (freelance) work. Perhaps your library already runs a weekly or monthly column in the paper (many public libraries do). If so, you might use one or more columns to write about your library's past; if not, then you will have to contact the paper's managing editor (or better yet, the editor of the local news and culture section) and

"pitch" the idea to them. Do not merely propose "an article" about your library's history: the editor will want more details than this. Propose a title, give approximate length (in words) and briefly outline the article's purpose and objectives. If the article will include interviews with anyone, state who; if it will include any images, describe them and be ready to offer proof that you have permission to publish them. Perhaps most importantly, explain when you want the story to run. Choosing a day or week that coincides with a relevant anniversary or special event can help your proposal, as newspapers tend to run "local interest" or "human interest" pieces based on their relevance to current events. Make your pitch at least a month or two ahead of time. If this is your library's first article, propose nothing longer than 1,200 words.

The type of article you should write is a *feature article*, not a news article. The latter is for reporting breaking news and follows a very different style and structure. Feature articles, on the other hand, usually cover "human interest" stories about noteworthy events, places or people. The box below lists some handbooks for writing these kinds of articles.

The following resources may assist you with the planning, writing and editing of **feature articles for newspapers** and magazines:

- Associated Press. *The Associated Press Stylebook 2019 and Briefing on Media Law*. New York: Basic Books, 2019.
- Blundell, William E. *The Art and Craft of Feature Writing: Based on the Wall Street Journal Guide*. New York: Plume, 1988.
- Flanagan, Kerrie and Angela Mackintosh. *The Writer's Digest Guide to Magazine Article Writing: A Practical Guide to Selling Your Pitches, Crafting Strong Articles and Earning More Bylines*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 2018.
- Ricketson, Matthew. *Writing Feature Stories: How to Research and Write Newspaper and Magazine Articles*. Crows Nest, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2004.
- Saleh, Naveed. *The Complete Guide to Article Writing: How to Write Successful Articles for Online and Print Markets*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 2018.

OPEN REFERENCE SOURCES

Open reference sources (most of them online encyclopedias) offer even more opportunities for sharing academic knowledge with the general public. These sources are often maintained by independent academic organizations, from regional or national historical societies to colleges and universities. Each source will explain how to submit new content on their websites. Some will require new content to pass peer-review before publication.

There are many open, online encyclopedias available, so when you choose one for your work make sure it has an appropriate focus. Do not assume that an article about the history of a public library would be too obscure; seldom do history-related open reference sources have much content about libraries, and many are eager to fill those gaps.

The following two online encyclopedias recently published articles about the history of public libraries for African Americans: the *Handbook of Texas*, which is published by the Texas State Historical Association; and *African American History*, which is published by Black Past. Both are independent organizations that support historical research.

3.3. EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Programs and events intended to communicate outside (or involve people external to) the library are usually considered forms of outreach. Examples related to public history are not uncommon and offer non-traditional options for sharing knowledge about your library's past.

PUBLIC TALKS

Many libraries maintain "speakers' series," which typically involve guests who give prepared talks about different subjects. These usually occur on predetermined dates, are advertised well in advance and, in most cases, are open to the general public. Examples include the president of a local astronomers' group advising on the selection of a telescope, a local poet reading from their work, or a local historian speaking about some aspect of the community's history. Some libraries include their own librarians as speakers, so this may be a good way to share your research with the public. If your library does not organize a speakers' series of any kind, perhaps a local museum or historical society does. You might present in their series or collaborate with them on a special event organized just for your presentation.

Librarians give all sorts of presentations as part of their jobs, so this toolkit will not spend much time explaining how to prepare an effective presentation. But above all, remember your audience and what their needs will be. They will likely know little to nothing about local history, never mind the history of your library. Limit your talk to an hour or less (not including time for questions and discussion); and despite any misgivings you may have about presentation software (like PowerPoint or Prezi), do not bother presenting anything about your library's history if you cannot offer your audience any visuals. Visuals (especially historical images) will make your presentation come alive.

Sharing Presentations Online

Until recently, public talks posed grave limitations for wider public sharing. But now, libraries can video-record and upload these talks either to their website or to an external platform like YouTube. If you do, remember that viewers tend not to watch videos longer than just a few minutes; so, consider editing the recording to just your talk's main points. Also, if your presentation involves other people, obtain their written permission to video-record them and to make the recording publicly available. Also make audience members aware that you are recording the presentation.

Upon completion of the Roots of Community, I posted slides from all presentations I made about the project, most of them at academic conferences. But they may be of some help:

- Public talk: "A Cornerstone of the Community: Houston's 'Colored Library' 1913 to 1961", presented June 2018 at the African American Library at the Gregory School in Houston, Texas.
- Academic conference: "Separate Places, Shared Spaces: Segregated Carnegie Libraries as Community Institutions in the Age of Jim Crow," presented November 2018 at the Southern Historical Association's Annual Meeting in Birmingham, Alabama.
- Academic conference: "Buildings and Books: Segregated Carnegie Libraries as Places for Community-Making, Interaction and Learning in the Age of Jim Crow," presented June 2017 at the SHARP Annual Conference in Victoria, British Columbia.

DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITS

Displays and exhibits are another common form of sharing. Although they may seem "traditional"—especially for librarians, who have prepared library book displays for generations—displays offer the public exciting opportunities to learn. Only in this case, your display will not include many books, if any; it will probably operate more like a small museum exhibit and showcase historical documents, artifacts and other "authentic" cultural materials. If your library has insufficient collections for this, you might consider partnering with a local museum or archives (or perhaps even a private collector) who may be willing to lend items to you for an exhibit.

Artifacts and Arrangement

Your exhibit might include any of the following: old library records (e.g., annual reports, letters, book catalogs), old technology (e.g., stamps or other charging equipment), images (historical photos or postcards), or even copies of very old books. Depending on available items and space, you might arrange your exhibit one of several ways:

- ✓ *chronologically*, showing your library's development through different periods;
- ✓ *typologically*, grouping artifacts by type or function;
- ✓ *contextually*, grouping items by location of their discovery; or
- ✓ *thematically*, grouping items based on common theme or idea[8]

Do not assume visitors will understand what the items are just by seeing them. Use labels or small cards to identify and explain their significance. Keep text plain and large enough so that a person standing at least 3-4 feet away can read it. Give your exhibit a title that describes its subject and purpose. You might also prepare a handout or brochure that provides further background information.

Many public libraries own small, lockable exhibit cases like the examples seen above. If not, cases may be obtained from a supplier of library or museum equipment. Vertical wall cases (not shown) may also be ideal, depending on the exhibit's size and intended location.

Security Concerns

Although museums sometimes exhibit artifacts without cases, avoid this approach for your exhibit. Use display cases and make sure they are lockable. Assume that everything is valuable and irreplaceable, so if space becomes a problem either find more cases or simply exclude less important items. Try placing display cases close to an information or circulation counter within the library itself, so that librarians and staff can watch them. Avoid placing them, for example, in or near meeting rooms used after hours by other community groups or organizations. Place signs nearby that prohibit visitors with food or drink in their hands from leaning directly over the cases. Last, consider using high-quality duplications of certain items rather than the originals: most documents can be scanned and reprinted in accurate color. This not only helps protect unique, irreplaceable items; but by printing high-quality copies, you also can also enlarge them, which will make them easier for visitors to see and read.

Other Considerations

Historical exhibits prepared by public libraries are usually temporary. Should you prepare one, determine far in advance where you will place it and for how long it will remain on display. Historical exhibits take considerably longer to prepare than a simple "reader's advisory" book display does; so, from a "return on investment" perspective, arrange for the exhibit to remain on display for at least several weeks. Choose a time of the year most relevant for the display (to coincide with an anniversary or event, for example) or choose a time of year you believe would attract the most visitors.

Not many guides exist for the planning and delivery of small historical displays for non-museum organizations. However, the following sources may be of some guidance:

- Bugge, Annveig. *Creating Exhibits for Small History Museums on a Limited Budget.* San Francisco: University of San Francisco Master's Projects and Capstones, Winter 2016.
- National History Day. *How to Create a Historical Exhibit*. College Park, MD: National History Day, 2018.
- Washington State Historical Society. "Creating a History Day Exhibit." Tacoma, WA: Washington State Historical Society, no date.

HISTORICAL MARKERS

Plaques and other historical markers are now commonplace near or on historical sites, usually the site of an extant or former building or the location of an important event. Most markers begin with the name of the person, place or event being commemorated followed by a brief (usually 100 words or less) overview of the subject's importance. These markers are usually created and maintained by local or regional organizations, for example independent historical societies. Most historical markers, however, are the products of state-level departments of history, heritage and/or tourism.

Usually, a substantial period (usually 50 or more years) must pass before a specific person, place or event becomes eligible for marker commemoration. Applying for a marker usually takes 1-2 years, requires sponsorship from local organizations like Chambers of Commerce or historical societies, and requires the payment of fees (usually a few thousand dollars). If the marker's intended location is not the applicant's own property, permission and cooperation from the location's owner must also be obtained.

Unveiling a new marker is often itself a newsworthy event, so if you apply for one to commemorate a former library building or perhaps even a pioneer librarian, be sure to organize a formal ceremony and publicize the marker's unveiling as much as possible. Almost two years after the *Meridian Star* ran a story in March 2017 about the Roots of Community project, local groups unveiled a historical marker at the former site of Meridian's 13th Street Colored Library. A February 2019 article in the *Star* covered the marker's unveiling ceremony.

A marker (lower right) standing outside Savannah's former colored Carnegie Library at 537 East Henry Street was erected with the cooperation of the Georgia Historical Society.

MEDIA COOPERATION

Promoting special events and programs will require working with news media. Unless your library already maintains direct, personal contacts with regional newspapers and television stations, the best (and sometimes only) way to alert news media is by circulating a formal press release. If you have never written one, you might find *Forbes* magazine's guide to writing a press release helpful.

Historical research seldom attracts media attention (especially research in progress) but connecting it to a special event will probably make a difference. Black History Month is a good choice but not the only time of year appropriate for publications or events or about former colored libraries. Consider also national holidays like Martin Luther King Jr. Day (the third Monday of each January) or the anniversaries of famous events like Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech (August 28th) or Rosa Parks's arrest in Montgomery (December 1st).

However, unless they have local relevance, avoid the anniversaries of obscure people or little-known events. No matter how important they may seem academically, they will probably not provide much basis for newspaper or television stories about library history.

3.4. ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The internet is arguably the public historian's most versatile tool. It can be used to create original, online-only content, or it can be used to enhance (or simply promote) any history-related publications, programs or events your library creates.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram seem to be the social media of choice for most public libraries. They are free to use, and their undying popularity offers libraries a potentially large audience. Yet libraries can sometimes underestimate the *social* aspect of "social media." A Facebook page, for example, is not simply an inexpensive alternative to a proper library web page. The main purpose of social media is to engage with others—and regularly. Maintaining a successful social media program therefore requires commitment, from the timely creation of new content to responding to comments left by visitors.

Most libraries already use social media for a variety of purposes, and plenty of handbooks and guides will explain how to maintain effective social media programs. Sharing historical content—of any kind, not just about the history of your library—will mean, in most cases, integrating it with the content your library already shares on social media about its other activities. This will mean posting historical content very selectively and usually in observance of relevant anniversaries or current events. An exception would be the special collections department of a larger public library, which might maintain their own social media pages. In that case, special collections staff will likely find it easier to integrate content about your library's history with the content they normally post about the city or region's history.

Content Types

Your library's history-related content will adopt one of the following forms:

- ✓ content that promotes current or forthcoming publications, programs or events about local (or your library's) history; and/or
- ✓ content that creates intrigue about your community's (or library's) past by showcasing items from library collections: e.g., a historical photograph or artifact, or perhaps a link to an oral history interview held in an online archive

Both types of content raise awareness of history-related issues and events, just in different ways. But keep content brief and as descriptive and non-judgmental as possible. While your articles, books or presentations will take clear positions on some issues, you will have comparatively little space on social media for this. Twitter allows only 288 characters per tweet (as of 2019); and while Facebook allows longer posts, its users seem to prefer shorter, more digestible forms of content. Do not be afraid to generate discussion, but reserve particularly sensitive or controversial topics for articles and presentations.

Remember that others can easily reproduce your social media content elsewhere rather easily. Social media pages will already identify your library by name, but make sure to mark additional content (particularly images) with your library's name and/or logo. If you share any content that is not from your library's own collections (or is, but may still be protected), obtain proper permission before using it.

The social media accounts of larger, more established institutions may inspire similar ideas for your library's sharing or historical content:

- **Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History**, Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library System: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- **Library of Congress** Special and International Collections: Facebook, Twitter and Prints and Photos Blog.
- **New York Public Library** Archives and Special Collections: Facebook (NYPL Picture Collection), Twitter (NYPL Archives) and Instagram (NYPL Picture Collection).
- **U.S. National Archives and Records Administration**: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

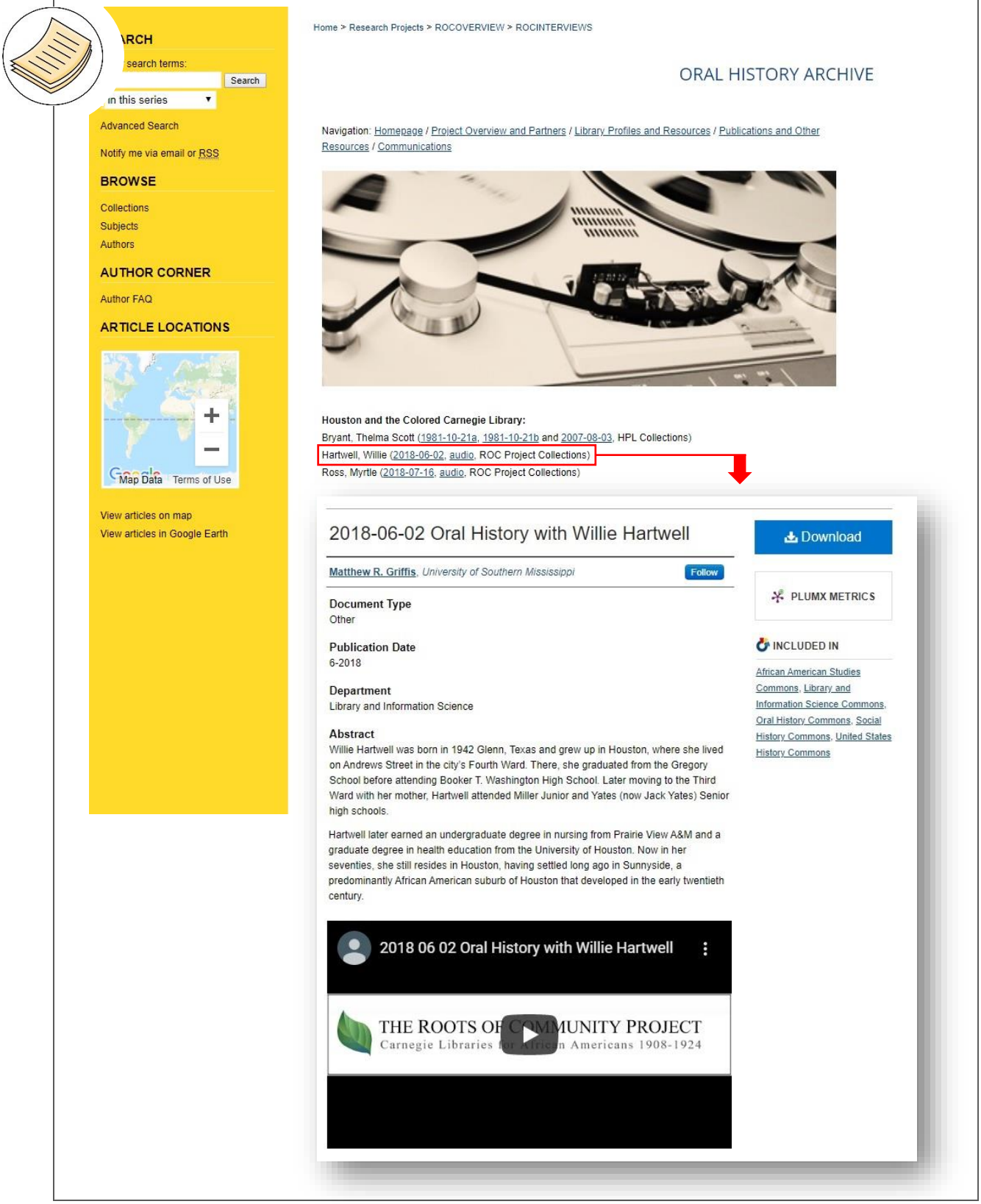
If your library maintains audio-recorded oral history collections, making transcripts available online is an effective way to share them with the general public. Part 2.3 of this toolkit discusses some of the more common methods and standards for managing an oral history program. But remember, a transcript without audio erases much of the interview's human aspects. If you obtained permission from participants to share the interviews publicly, then consider posting copies of these recordings for audio streaming.

Part 2.3 of this toolkit lists several examples of online oral history collections related to the history of public libraries and/or the African American communities they served. Some of these collections offer both text and audio online. But while posting PDF copies of transcripts might be simple for most libraries, offering streamable audio may not. Consider, then, uploading audio recordings to an external YouTube account and embedding these files into your library's webpage. YouTube offers an "embedded link" option for uploaded videos: use this in your library page's html code. If coded properly, the webpage should display the YouTube file in an embedded window or frame. Visitors can use "play" and other functions the same as they would on an actual YouTube page. This approach will not entirely prevent others from making copies of the recordings; but it is far preferable to posting audio files for a visitor to download onto their computer.

My online archive for the Roots of Community was part of the project's larger website. I had only a handful of original interviews to share, so I constructed a main page for the archive which contained a master list of all project interviews and then a separate page for each interview, which included the interview's transcript and audio recording. Each interview's page also displayed basic metadata about the interview, including the brief biographical note I composed for the transcript.

PODCASTS

Podcasts are like an international form of public radio: serialized episodes of audio content downloadable (or, as is more often the case, streamable) via the internet. And while podcasts can often seem entertaining, their primary purpose is to educate or inform. Podcasts typically focus on a specific subject or theme and individual episodes may contain news, storytelling, interviews or discussions between people. Some podcasts are freely available (usually from their creator's website) while others cost money to access.



The online archive for the Roots of Community project was part of the project's larger website. A main page (top) contained a master list of all project interviews, then each interview received its own separate page (inset) which included the transcript as a downloadable PDF plus an embedded audio version for simultaneous streaming. Each interview's page also displayed basic metadata, including a brief biographical note for each participant.

Well-produced podcasts require much planning but can reach a wide audience. They are also ideal for longer content, though some episodes last only a few minutes. However long you make your podcast's episodes, do not "wing it" or improvise too much content. In fact, except for interviews and discussions, script as much content as possible. Also keep narration simple: avoid language beyond a senior high school vocabulary; but if you must use any jargon (for example, terms only a historian would understand) then your narrator should explain these terms quickly. National Public Radio offers a free online guide to podcast production, with many tips on planning, scripting, and audio mixing.

To record original audio, you need at least a computer with audio production software (like Audacity) installed on it. You can use your computer's built-in mic if you wish, but external USB microphones will probably produce richer, more professional-sounding results. By using a software program like Audacity, you can record multiple sources of audio simultaneously or at different times and mix it later. You can also import existing audio from external sources. If necessary, Audacity's free tutorials can help you learn these and many other audio production skills.

If your library already produces a podcast series, then it may be possible to include content about the history of your library. You might produce one or two full episodes about the subject; you might instead break this content up and integrate it into several episodes. If your library does not already produce a podcast, you might consider starting one. But remember that podcasts are like social media: to build enough of a following, they require the regular production of new content. It may not be wise to launch a podcast series just to share information about your library's history.

The following handbooks advise on the production of podcasts and would be ideal for beginners:

- Callanan, Casey. *How to Podcast When You Aren't Tech Savvy: A Clear-Cut Book About How and Why to Launch a Podcast*. Independently published, 2018.
- Eiman, Mike. *Podcast: Learn How to Stop Babbling and Start Podcasting*. Independently published, 2017.
- Geoghegan, Michael W. and Dan Klass. *Podcast Solutions: The Complete Guide to Audio and Video Podcasting*, 2nd edition. New York: Apress, 2007.
- Meinzer, Kristen. *So You Want to Start a Podcast: Finding Your Voice, Telling Your Story and Building a Community That Will Listen.* New York: William Morrow, 2019.
- Power, David. *Introduction to Podcast Technology: Discover the Essential Tools and Techniques You Need to Record, Produce and Launch Your Podcast*. CreateSpace, 2016.

VIDEO PRODUCTION

Online video is probably one of the best ways to reach a general interest audience, especially since the internet offers many options for sharing video. But remember that a well-produced video takes longer to plan than it does to make. If the video will include any spoken dialogue or narration, script this first and then decide what visual and/or additional audio you will need to enhance it.

Some public history videos include dramatic reenactments of historical events; most take a straight documentary approach. Should you include reenactments in your video, do so with extreme caution. Make sure to use experienced actors and invest as much time and money as possible in building

convincing sets. One reason "History Minute"-style pieces work so well on television is because they look professional. On the other hand, low-budget reenactments created by inexperienced amateurs can seem less than serious (perhaps even unintentionally funny), and that is not the impression you want your videos to create. It will seem disrespectful.

Be Brief, Be Interesting

If you take a straight "documentary" approach, you can maximize your video's appeal several ways, especially if you plan to share it on sites like YouTube, Vimeo or Dailymotion. Above all, keep the video brief. Many casual viewers will avoid watching clips longer than 2-5 minutes. True, celebrities regularly post video clips that last much longer, and these often receive thousands if not millions of views. But you are not a celebrity. True also that viewers with a serious interest in library history might enjoy a video longer than five minutes. But how many people do you know that show a strong interest in library history who are not also academics or librarians? Probably not many, and either way these people should not be your video's target audience. Your aim is to engage those who would not normally find the subject so interesting.

How do you make the subject seem interesting? For starters, avoid videos full of "talking heads." Older documentaries often showed "experts"—usually bespectacled professors surrounded by shelves of books—pontificating about the documentary's subject. This may have seemed interesting years ago but would bore most viewers now, especially if you have only a few minutes to hold their attention. If you use expert commentary (or perhaps even testimony from video-recorded oral histories), briefly show the speaker then run their audio commentary overtop more relevant visuals, like historical photos or archival films. You can still identify speakers by name using "silent supers"—superimposed text that appears briefly at the bottom of the frame.

If you wish to create more than just a few minutes of video, you might produce more than one clip, each about a different aspect of your library's history: the library's origins and establishment, the library's first building, early collections and programs, important librarians, and so forth. Online platforms like YouTube allow users to arrange related clips sequentially, so that viewers may watch a series of shorter clips if they choose. In the world of online video, this is always better than creating one very long piece.

Equipment and Software

The average smartphone or tablet camera is more than adequate for producing quality online video. In fact, these kinds of cameras are ideal because:

- ✓ they usually record in formats compatible with most video editing programs;
- ✓ their limited storage capacities encourage you to keep your raw video files brief; and
- ✓ most will capture video in widescreen (usually 16:9 or 18:9 for smartphones), which is more ideal for today's computer, television and tablet screens than the older, full-screen aspect ratio (4:3)

Free video editing programs exist but seldom if ever create professional-looking results. Avoid them if you can. Consider instead basic editors like iMovie or Video Editor, which sometimes come preinstalled on new computers and usually offer all functions necessary for producing short clips. But if your library plans to produce video clips regularly, you might invest in an editing program like Adobe Premiere or Final Cut Pro. You will likely not use many of their more advanced functions, but their transitions often look more professional and their sound mixing options are usually much better. Alternatively, you may wish to edit your clip's audio separately before merging it with the finished video. This is especially wise if all you plan to show are historical images and run basic audio overtop. If so, you will probably find

Audacity more than adequate for your needs (for more information about Audacity, see the previous section on podcasts). Whatever equipment or software you choose, edit your clip using compressed formats common for online video streaming (e.g., .mp4, .avi, .wmw and .flv). If you obtain any raw video in a less compressed format, then you may wish to convert it into something more manageable before you even begin editing.

Choosing Effective Thumbnails

Once uploaded to an online collection, most video clips will show a static "thumbnail" image. In many cases, you can choose this thumbnail from the clip itself. If you do, choose the frame you think best summarizes the clip's content or purpose. If you have the option to upload a separate image, you may but use caution. Do not choose an image the video does not contain, especially if the image promises something the video does not in fact deliver. Although "clickbait" tactics are common on platforms like YouTube, they erode viewer trust and public libraries are wise to avoid them.

The following **online video clips** share information about the history of libraries, Carnegie libraries and even the history of colored Carnegie libraries. They are strong examples because they are intended for the general public: none is longer than a few minutes; and all avoid "talking heads" entirely by running narrator commentary overtop a gallery of changing historical images. Visuals engage the viewer's eye continuously by slowly panning and zooming. Narrators speak knowledgeably but in accessible language.

"Carnegie Libraries," was produced by Mississippi Public Broadcasting in 2017 as part of their *Thread Through Time* series. It focuses primarily on Meridian's two Carnegie libraries (the main and colored branches) but also explains the broader history of Carnegie libraries across the state. Though the clip uses an on-screen narrator, she is seen only at the very beginning and end.

"Colored Carnegie Library," was produced by Houston Arts and Media as Episode #31 of their *Ham Slice of History* series. Not even two minutes long, the clip covers the foundations of Houston's Colored Library in Freedman's Town, its services and programs, its building design and its eventual closure in 1961. It uses contemporary background music to evoke a sense of the period and provides full credits at the end for all borrowed materials.

"San Diego's Public Library," was presented by the San Diego Central Library and tells the story of California's earliest Carnegie library. Just over four minutes long, the clip covers the building's fifty-year lifespan from its opening in 1902 to its demolition in 1952. It includes dozens of historical photographs and postcard images and offers full credits at the end.

The following handbooks would be ideal for learning basic online video production:

- Masters, Nathyn Brendan. *The YouTube Producer's Handbook*, 2nd edition. TimeCode Mechanics, 2018.
- Owens, Jim. *Video Production Handbook*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Stockman, Steve. *How to Shoot Video That Doesn't Suck*. New York: Workman Publishing, 2011.

POSTSCRIPT

If this toolkit has not inspired you to share more of your library's history with the wider public, hopefully it has at least convinced you of the importance of library records and other materials related the history of America's libraries. Their preservation is important, and not just for future generations of librarians and researchers, but also for future generations of library users. To demonstrate the impacts of public libraries on communities, there are few ways more effective than presenting today's libraries as living extensions of a long and important tradition. Moreover, the representation of this history must not only be accurate; it must also be complete and include the subject's more neglected aspects, particularly the history of libraries for African Americans. If librarians lack the resources necessary for this work, hopefully they will at least make their library's records more accessible for other researchers.

Since not all library degree programs offer training in archival practices, librarians might wish to develop these skills in other ways. The handbooks and guides listed in Part 1.2, for example, offer a good start; archivists' associations at state- and regional levels sometimes offer introductory workshops on the processing and preservation of records and manuscripts. Should your library need any special materials for this work, consult the catalogs of well-established archival suppliers. While the equipment and materials available through library suppliers might suit some tasks, historical materials (especially paper) have needs much different than standard library materials. A quick browse of Gaylord Archival's *Guide to Collections Care* should make this clear. Also consider the National Park Service's "Conserve O Gram" guides to archival preservation (see parts 13, 14 and 19 especially).

As this toolkit's Introduction argues, there is no telling how much of our profession's history survives, as so much of it still awaits discovery. It is therefore crucial that we increase efforts to preserve it before the opportunity passes forever.

IMAGE CREDITS

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	Front entrance, main branch of the Nashville Public Library, March 2017. Photograph by Mx. Granger, shared via Wikimedia Commons under a Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication license.
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Dryades Street Library, New Orleans, ca. 1916-17. Courtesy of the Roots of Community collection.

Thomas F. Blue, Rachel Harris and assistant on the steps of the (Western) Colored Branch, ca. 1908. Courtesy of the Louisville Free Public Library, Western Branch Library African American Archives.

Page 29 Children inside Evansville's Cherry Street Branch, date unknown. Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, "Children viewing stereographs," Image 74504.

Page 30 Postcard view of Boston Public Library at Copley Square (day view), ca. 1907. From the author's personal collection.

Postcard view of Boston Public Library at Copley Square (night view), ca. 1910. From the author's personal collection.

Page 31 "Negro Library is Formally Opened," *Tennessean* (Nashville), February 11, 1916. Clipping from the Roots of Community collection.

Page 33 Proposed plans for Louisville's (Western) Colored Branch, McDonald and Dodd, architects. Originally published in the *Third Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Louisville Free Public Library for the Year Ending August 31, 1907* (Louisville Free Public Library, 1908). Source edition from Harvard University; digital copy shared via the Internet Archive in 2008.

Page 34 "Carnegie Library, 537 East Henry Street, Savannah, Chatham County, GA" (main floor, north and west elevations). National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Drawings appear courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Historic American Buildings Survey, Reproduction number HABS GA-302.

Page 35 Western Branch cornerstone, Louisville Free Public Library, February 2017. Photograph by author.

Dryades Branch cornerstone, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 2017. Photograph by author.

Page 36 Detail from old city map of Houston, pre-1950. Courtesy of the Houston History Alliance.

Carnegie Colored Library site plan, date unknown. Courtesy of the Houston Public Library Special Collections, Houston Metropolitan Research center.

Page 37 East Branch Library of Evansville, Indiana, February 2018. Photograph by author.

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Page 42 Exterior of Cherry Street Branch of Evansville, Indiana (detail from flier). Courtesy of the Willard Library of Evansville.

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	Postcard of the San Diego Carnegie Library, ca. 1907. From the author's personal collection.

ENDNOTES

[1] Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Hodder Arnold, 2006), 41.

[2] Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing History*, 5th ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 2.

[3] Jesse H. Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library: The Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

[4] Michael Harris, "The Purpose of the American Public Library: A Revisionist Interpretation of History," *Library* Journal 98, no. 16 (1973): 2509-2514. Also see Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Library and American Society, 1876-1920* (New York: New York Free Press, 1979).

[5] Darryl L. Peterkin compares the "story" aspect of history—particularly institutional history—to a "play," with setting (places), characters (some more important than others) and theme. Much of a play's story is driven by conflict. See Peterkin's "Reading and Writing Institutional Histories," in *The History of U.S. Higher Education*, ed. Marybeth Gasman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 9-18.

[6] Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 7.

[7] Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 114.

[8] Faye Sayer, *Public History: A Practical Guide* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 54-55.